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Vol. 1. No. 153. May 24, 1884. Subscription \$30.

Entered at the post-office N. Y. as Second-Class Matter.

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BERLIN SOCIETY

TRANSLATED FROM THE 9TH. FRENCH EDITION.

NEW YORK:
NORMAN L. MUNRO, PUBLISHER,
24 & 26 VANDEWATER ST.

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BERLIN SOCIETY,

BY

COUNT PAUL VASILI.

TRANSLATED FROM THE NINTH FRENCH EDITION

BY JACOB ABARBANELL.

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MY YOUTHFUL FRIEND,—I received your letter of the 18th inst., in which you inform me of your entrance into the diplomatic service, and your simultaneous appointment as attache at Berlin. The first part of your letter pleased me very much, the second not near so well. Berlin is not a good place to make one's *debut*. There are too many serious political questions discussed there and too little amusement for a young man of your age coming there entirely unknown. Society in Berlin is not very attractive to a stranger. The influential men are very reserved, the women either prudish or frivolous, and the young men are mainly good for nothing fellows. They dance a great deal there, a fact which will not please you very much; and understand very little about the delightful art of talking, which will not tend to increase your enthusiasm. Berlin, in short, is thoroughly provincial. Nowhere do people malign each other more or intrigue against each other so much. Society is given up to petty jealousies, and is continually hunting after scandals. People do not read, know very little, and outside of their own circles, take very little interest in the outside world.

One must know society in Berlin very well to avoid losing oneself in it, or better still, one must be thoroughly acquainted with the different social circles which exist in Berlin, so as to be able to move in them with profit and pleasure. I fear you will have neither the time nor opportunity to study the character of the people with whom you will shortly live.

You write me that you regret that you are coming to Berlin at the very moment in which I am leaving it never to return, and you desire me to lighten your first steps in your new sphere by sketching the portraits of a few of the persons you will meet

there. I cannot see anything out of the way in this, it being self-understood that what follows is strictly confidential.

I shall only write for your own instruction. I say to "instruct" you and not to "convince" you—my way of thinking and observing shall not influence you in the least. You know I am prejudiced to a great degree and have very biased opinions. It may be possible that I am too severe and unjust as a whole, it will then be your duty to keep the right and the wrong apart.

Do not look for any system in these letters. I shall write just as the whim seizes me. You know my aversion to methodical classifications. As soon as I have two or three interesting letters together I will send them to you. Do not look for any specified dates. Hunting and my desire to enjoy a long awaited "life of uselessness" will cause me more than once to neglect my Berlin sketches. But I hope that just on this account you will place more worth on my letters, the more unexpected they arrive.

FIRST LETTER.

THE ROYAL FAMILY.

THE Emperor William is, without dispute, the most popular monarch among his people now living.

Outside of his military successes, he is very amiable as a man, personally pleasing and very patriarchal in his goodness. Without possessing extraordinary acuteness, he is gifted with a sharp insight and the talent to discover just those persons who will be most serviceable to him, pushing them forward and maintaining them in their positions in spite of all opposition. He hasn't any personal vanity, hides behind the shadow of the Chancellor when necessary, and yet possesses sufficient dignity not to allow the world to perceive it, whenever he submits to the latter's authoritative will. He is ambitious, that kind of ambition which displays itself in hankering after the possessions of one's neighbor. Morally he has the same appetite as physically. He always wants more than he has and even at this late day, still regrets that he didn't take Saxony in 1866. His principles and will are absolute. He has favorites, but he never allows them to have anything to do with politics, which is the exclusive right of his ministers.

Emperor William looks upon his son as incapable and imagines all Germany concurs with him on this point. He combines inordinate selfishness with pig-headed obstinacy. He busies himself with governmental affairs more than is generally supposed to be the case, whenever any question which concerns him personally comes up. In such instances he generally pushes his views through by means of his obstinacy. In everything else he relies on others. The army possesses in him a faithful defender, and this is the only department he has never allowed Prince Bismarck to meddle with. He has never approved of the crown prince's reign during the latter's regency in 1878. The Treaty of Berlin, in 1877, never pleased him. He would have preferred a smaller Bulgaria and was angry at the emancipation

of the Jews in Roumania. These two points dissatisfied him very much, as he himself in a confidential moment told one of my friends. Was it because his advice in so important a matter was never asked? Or is it his political conviction which causes him to deplore these two things?

He has always had luck in life, a luck which he has understood how to take advantage of. In public affairs he never speaks of politics, being exclusively a man of the world. His politeness is proverbial and not artificial. He knows he is indebted for everything to others, and is not ungrateful. On the other hand, he never allows any one to forget that his name covers everything that occurred.

Take him all in all, he is an amiable person, open-hearted, not very intelligent, somewhat narrow-minded, full of tact and a man of heart. He is a man who can only gain the respect and sympathy of his subjects, and who will have a place among the great monarchs, without ever having been a great man.

The Empress Augusta has been endowed by nature with a great deal of intelligence, but imagines she has more than is really the case. She has had faithful friends, devoted admirers, and bitter enemies. Those persons who intimate that she possesses great common sense are mistaken, just as those who pretend she is malicious and dangerous. She is neither extraordinarily gifted, nor is she bad, but she is intriguing, mendacious, and affected. She wishes at all hazards to play a part, poses as an æsthete so as to gull people into the belief that she is *au fait* in regard to all artistic and scientific things which occur in the world, at the same time endeavoring also to make herself popular with the people. But she has neither real dignity nor tact. She intrusts her secrets to her maid-of-honor, Madame von Heyndorff, who in company with several other ladies of the Berlin *haute monde*, makes capital out of them. She surrounds herself with courtiers and favorites, who behind her back are the first to speak ill of their protectress and benefactor. In reality a good-hearted woman, philanthropic in the extreme, she makes herself laughable through her constant efforts to appear great. Her heart is in the right place, her benevolence unceasing, nevertheless she does not understand the art of giving, but on the contrary, possesses a kind of talent to undo all her goodness in this direction by the way in which she gives. Forcibly trying to appear amiable she generally achieves the opposite of what she intends. Upon the whole very little liked, she has never been worthily respected. People do not believe either in her philanthropy or the other good sides of her character, which she actually has. She bores and bothers every one from the emperor down to the servants. An unhappy person, this empress, but only so through her own fault. Whenever she shall see fit to leave this world, people will breathe more freely—but later on a time will come when she will be regretted.

The Crown Prince Frederick William is not a man of action. He is a domestic man in the word's fullest sense. He lives only for his wife and adores his children—with the exception of his eldest son, whose intellectual superiority he fears. At the Court

his political ideas are looked upon as dreams. His extraordinary admiration for the crown-princess has made a thorough Englishman of him. For twenty-five years he has been in the position of a prince who expects from day to day to take the reins of the government in hand and is naturally irritated at the inferior position in which he is kept. The emperor and Bismarck look upon him as a Utopist. He loves the arts, encourages the authors and I wouldn't be surprised if the character of Augustus were his ideal—only its the little Virgils he protects, the whole of whom joined together would not equal the great Virgil. When he ascends the throne, his policy will be radically different from that of his father. For this reason he is the hope of all those who detest his father's internal and external policy.

I think, however, they are mistaken. The prince will never know when to make up his mind or seize an idea at the right time. His manners are slightly cold and in spite of his refinement, one does not feel at home in his company. He is more confidential than amiable. His heart is really good, but those persons who know him intimately assert that should he become emperor, he never will be able to command more respect for himself, than he does as crown-prince. He hasn't any ambition but a natural desire to reign. In spite of his enervation, he never forgets an insult. Under his reign Germany will have peace, and the greatest boon for France would be a long continuance of it. The army does not like him. In society, even those who are nearest to him, criticise his ability always from a political standpoint. He has been the basis of many unpleasant legends. His father fears him and tries as much as possible to hide him in the shade. The son very often resents such treatment. The country thinks a great deal of the crown-prince, his own family very little.

The crown princess is a woman of a variety of talents. She writes political memoirs, corresponds with philosophers and professors, sculptures, paints, composes sonatas, and makes architectural plans. She possesses great common sense, but her education is so universal, that it sometimes appears as if her ideas run away with her. Her vivacity occasionally disturbs the lucidity and harmony of her ideas. Their substance is so many-sided that she feels a desire to crystallize them into maxims in the manner of La Rochefoucauld. Society doesn't bother her much. She does not love it, perhaps she even despises it, since one often sees at her parties people one does not meet anywhere else and who only mix with society at her house. She doesn't do anything to secure the reputation of a society woman, but she has the instinct, one might say the pride, of her superior rank as a princess. She does not appear to place any faith in the strength and length of personal friendships. The least thing in the world is sufficient to cause her to despise people or break off relations whereas should the upholding or pushing through of an idea be at stake, she displays the greatest persistence. She concerns herself with politics and often has ideas diametrically opposed to those about her. She often goes to Italy under cover of her artistic impulses, in reality to

escape from an awkward position or give up an idea. She is at heart very liberal, which is the greatest abuse which can be flung at her. Her relations with the empress are strained, but not so with the emperor. Through her influence and love she has great influence over her husband.

Prince William, the eldest son of the crown-prince, is only twenty-four years old. It is hard to tell yet how he will turn out. One thing is certain and without dispute, viz., that he is a young man of intelligence, heart and head, and has a future. He is the most intelligent of all the imperial princes; besides being brave, enterprising, ambitious, a hot head but a heart of gold, sympathetic in the highest degree, and possessing a vivacity of disposition and flow of language surprising in a German. He adores the army, which returns the admiration. In spite of his youth he has understood how to make himself popular in all circles of society; he instructs himself, reads, is continually making plans for the benefit of his country and possesses a wonderful acquaintance with politics. He will certainly become a splendid fellow and probably a great monarch. Prussia will, perhaps, find in him a second Frederick the Great, but without the latter's skepticism. He is endowed with a fund of humor and geniality, which in a great measure obliterates the traces of the Hohenzollern in him. In the first place, he will be a king himself, he will not allow himself to be led, he will have sound opinions, prompt decision, energetic action and a strong will. When he shall have reached the throne, he will continue the work of his grandfather, and undo whatever work his father shall have done. The enemies of Germany will have a formidable opponent in him, he will perhaps be the Henry IV. of his country. His greatest fault is a too great affection for women. He has a number of mistresses, and he can fall into the hands of a favorite who will ruin his policy. His wife is too insignificant to have the slightest influence over so tempestuous a nature; he neglects her even now, and will soon leave her entirely to herself, as she hasn't any attractive allurements to speak of. It is not improbable that he will ever fall into the net of some intellectual woman, but so far his different *liaisons* have not borne any fruits. Should he go on forming connections in the lower classes of society, nothing dangerous will occur. But should he one day attract the attention of a lady of high class society then we must regard his actions with alarm and base our opinion of him from this side.

SECOND LETTER.

PRINCES AND PRINCESSES.

THE Princess Augusta Victoria, wife of Prince William, is so insignificant that it would be useless to describe her other than that she does her duty perfectly, and Prussia need never fear for crown princes so long as she lives. A few scandalmongers assert her character could be more amiable—but this is merely the result of her interesting condition at times, and not a part of

her nature. Although not handsome, she is interesting; modest and not yet used to the ways of the great world, she nevertheless inspires esteem. The relations between the young couple are friendly without being affectionate. The prince likes to amuse himself, but this is natural in a person not yet 25 years of age, and a future imperial crown is sufficient recompense to a princess of Schleswig for the marital infidelities of her husband.

Prince Frederick Charles, the nephew of the emperor, of whom so much was written in 1870, does not in a way justify the noise made about him. He does not possess a single talent. He is simply a good and brave soldier, and one of the worst rowdies in existence in private life. His greatest virtue is the art of listening well. Through great study a tactician and generally feared on account of brutality, he has no other passions than drink and hunting. He lives in retirement at his hunting-box Dreilinden, hates society and is only happy in the society of a few friends, all good drinkers, and in whose company he can indulge all his passions without restraint. It is even said that he is more than brutal toward his wife, a pretty woman full of kindness and talent, who combines intelligence with goodness, who is grateful for the slightest courtesy, but who unfortunately is afflicted with a deafness, which in no small degree accounts for her husband's aversion to her. With the exception of the prince's personal friends they do not receive any company. Society, bored by the princess' deafness and revolted by the prince's brutality, avoids them.

Prince Albrecht of Prussia assumes in the royal family the position of a ball-room in a fine dwelling. He is tall, quite imposing, and represents his country, wherever necessary, with great *éclat*. Baptisms, marriages, crownings, funerals, everywhere where the presence of a Hohenzollern, either from politeness or policy toward other reigning houses is necessary, one sees him in his blue dragoon uniform, his head erect, his face without a spark of intelligence, but full of martial power. Outside of these affairs, he lives in Hanover, where he is as secluded as a golden coach in a stable. He's a good fellow, a perfect husband, a loving father, and a prince similar to those we see every day, neither better nor worse than the others, enjoying his position, and without the vanity to imagine that fate might not have brought him to the world in a different way.

Besides the persons above described, there are several other members of the royal family, but they are too insignificant to be mentioned here. Amongst others, Princess Charlotte of Meiningen, the eldest daughter of the crown prince. Outside of the fact that she is young, pretty, coquettish, and married to a man she does not deserve, there is nothing to be said of her.

As for the Prince and Princess of Hohenzollern, I am not quite sure whether they can be counted as members of this illustrious family, although the emperor counts them as such. This couple occupy a peculiar position.

Before his marriage the Prince of Hohenzollern lived in Berlin on his income, went in good and bad society, had several *liasons*

known throughout the city, in short led a bachelor's life in the largest sense of the word. People looked upon him as of so little account that when he married his wife wasn't able to assert her rank. Then the empress interposed, took the princess under her protection, gave her a maid-of-honor and commanded that she be treated as a princess of the blood. This decision of the empress created a perfect sensation in Berlin. The whole band of feminine blue blood princesses refused to give the Princess Louise precedence, maintaining that a princess of Thurn and Taxis had no such right, forgetting that the Hohenzollern-Signaringens are cousins of the emperor. After a great many struggles and objections, they were forced at length to give in, but the poor princess nevertheless was forced to undergo a good many insults, to atone for the concessions made in her favor. She was found to be ugly, awkward, proud, repulsive and even to-day, four years afterward, is still unforgiven for the social position she acquired through marriage. Envy still clings to the heels of the young woman, who is just as amiable as handsome, just as intelligent as good, in a word, the living incarnation of attractiveness, intelligence and beauty. In spite of these advantages Princess Frederick of Hohenzollern cannot be counted as one of earth's happy beings; she undoubtedly knows and discerns the hate and jealousy which surround her, for she lives very retired and only sees a few persons, crowded and hemmed in by a strict etiquette, whose victim she is, though she is accused of keeping it in existence.

THIRD LETTER.

THE COURT.

THERE is absolutely nothing attractive in the immediate surroundings of the emperor. It is a collection of sapless and dried-up mummies. The court, as at present constituted, produces the impression of a museum of pieces of old furniture. People have become used to always finding the same persons in the same place. When one sees, at a grand evening reception, the emperor pass by, preceded by a whole escort of lame veterans, and followed by a troupe of younger persons, who, however, are already anxious, by every effort of art, to conceal the ineradicable ravishes of the years, one cannot help admiring this king, who has known how to use up two generations in his service, and nevertheless to remain so robust and fresh.

Physical exhaustion—that may pass: we can pardon it in the old parade-horses who surround their emperor. But we cannot help being exasperated at the tricks of these favorites, who are not favorites at all, and who abuse not the affection of their sovereign, but simply his common generosity to snatch all sorts of favors, this one a title, that one a decoration, etc., etc., etc. Each one assumes the right to set aside whoever is in his way, and to watch over the monarch in an impudent and presumptuous manner, as if he were a piece of property belonging to him. The emperor himself is not aware of these little tricks; he is determined to keep and to retain his old servants around

him, and although he is too selfish to miss them much if they are taken from him by death, he does not wish to be separated from the living, however little serviceable they may be. In this way, Count Puckler still remains at the head of the royal household, and Count Perponcher, court-marshal, though the former is nearly blind, and the latter—but it is better not to say too much about the latter, anyway.

The emperor's personal service consists of six aides-de-camp. Two of them, Count Lehndorff and Prince Antoine Radziwill, are already generals and yet have not left their posts since fifteen years, if not longer. I will speak of the latter, more in detail, in another letter. As to the former he is an ex-Lovelace, a former professional lady-killer who enjoyed the favor of almost all the beauties of Berlin. Intellectually a cipher, inordinately vain and radically selfish, he had nevertheless known how to please, thanks to his handsome figure and arrogant self-conceit. He is not an evil-minded person; yet he has more than once done mischief—sometimes through want of delicacy, at other times through heedlessness. He has known how to retain the emperor's favor; he has even accomplished that the emperor paid his debts without anybody ever discovering the reason why. His position at court is so fixed and all mothers with eligible daughters fought for him in spite of his stormy past. Suddenly, however—about two years ago—to the despair of a number of young ladies and of a fascinating widow who was so sure of being married to him that she had already prepared a study for him, the count offered his hand in marriage to Miss Margaret von Kanitz, a young, twenty-year-old, beautiful and amiable girl, but so insignificant that she was the last thought of to enslave such an old libertine. The wedding came off and so far the Lehndorff household is one of the happiest on earth.

The four other aides-de-camp of the emperor count equally little in influence and prominence. Only one makes an exception, Prince Henry XVIII. of Reuss, a handsome man, a brave hunter, a favorite in society, amiable, good-natured, a little awkward, slightly conceited, but nevertheless a man of success, who has courted many women and who to-day assumes the mien of one satiated and disgusted with love. He is occasionally sarcastic by accident, haughty, and not without aversion in his sympathies as well as in his antipathies; and this aversion, as a very skilled conversationalist, he can express in the best way. He is a favorite of Prince William, and it will not take long for him to also become a favorite of the emperor in whose retinue he has been only since a few months.

General von Albedyll, the chief of the military-cabinet, is one of the most hated personages in all Prussia. His official position makes him a sort of awful being, for on him depend all army appointments and promotions. He is a good, somewhat easy-natured man who, through fear of making enemies among those who have already reached the goal, makes all the more bitter ones among those who are still on the upward path. The young officers curse him on account of his mania to keep people in their positions—a mania which paralyzes all army promotion.

There has never been in Germany so many old generals with palsied arms and limping feet, nor so many lieutenants who have grown gray with anger as lieutenants. I don't know whether it is true or not, but Herr von Albedyll is accused of causing this state of affairs, and on the day on which he receives the command of an army corps, the camp-fires in all the regimental barracks will be lighted for joy. He is personally very polite and amiable—but a man of false character, like all Prussians from the eastern part of the kingdom. He has favorites whom he forcibly puts in positions—something which in a man in his position, and with his influence, is akin to a lack of justice. The emperor is greatly attached to him, and prizes his devotion. Society receives him in the person of his wife, who is really a charming woman. She is a sister of the handsome Duchess of Manchester. Less brilliant and handsome than her elder sister, she possesses a more serious character. Madame von Albedyll is, above all, good, candid and friendly. She has enemies—but they are enemies who only tend to do her honor.

The court of the empress consists of the chief lady of the court, two ladies of the palace, a court-marshal, a private secretary, and various maids of honor and chamberlains who relieve each other according to the exigencies of the service.

The chief lady of the court, Countess Perponcher, the sister-in-law of the similarly named court-marshal of the emperor, is an affable woman and a lady of very high degree. Pleasant and polite, she performs the duties of her position in an admirable and always obliging manner; she is distinguished for nothing except an enormous black wig which rises up from the top of her head like a tower; she is as insignificant as she is kind and obliging. She gives receptions, which are a trifle more cheerful than a funeral, but invitations to which are nevertheless eagerly sought for, for the reason that at these receptions one can crowd against all the royal and princely highnesses in Berlin.

Of the two ladies of the palace, one, the Countess Adelaide Hacke, is a hunchback, and has the spite if not the intelligence which generally marks these freaks of nature. She has great influence with the empress, whom at times she treats rather wickedly. She is her majesty's *alter ego*, the person who represents her on all possible occasions. She loves intrigue, excitement and noise. Her soft, low voice has something false and artificial about it. She says "My dear" to everybody, displays the look and demeanor of a Madonna, in which, with her figure, she is not particularly successful, and, at the same time, she secretly and stealthily attacks the honor of this person, slanders that one, invidiously hints at the faults of Madame X, calls attention to Madame A's foibles, and spreads right and left the poison of her shameful insinuations and the seeds of her insulting suspicions. She is evil-minded without herself being entirely conscious of it, and speaks ill of everybody, not through deliberate spite, but because it is her nature, which, condemned to ugliness, cannot permit the beautiful in her fellow-beings to pass unchallenged.

Her colleague, the Countess Louise Oriolla, it is said, was

beautiful in her youth. The emperor himself, it seems, once slightly courted her and occasionally does so still, on account of his respect for whatever has come down from the past. The empress has no particularly great affection for her, and the countess would, without doubt, be glad if her imperial mistress were to die, as she cherishes in her heart a vague hope that the emperor, if this obstacle were removed, could be induced to imitate the example which his father once gave in connection with the creation of the Princess of Liegnitz. Countess Oriolla, though apparently the personification of good nature, is nevertheless always happy when accident removes the veil from some or other evil habit or fault of her friends. When she lets loose her malicious darts, a cool, sardonic smile hovers around her lips, which involuntarily reminds one of Mephistopheles' taunts. She is a favorite in society, where everything is, as a rule, judged superficially; neither the black baseness nor the jealousy is there perceived, which occasionally induces the exalted lady of the palace to descend with her foot into the gutter in order to fling the mud at others.

Herr von Knesebeck, the empress' private secretary, is a slim little man, sickly, and though only thirty years of age, already bald; he is smart and cunning, and knows how to extricate himself from the most embarrassing complications with surprising ability. He is well educated, well read, a good talker, could, at a pinch, also manage an intrigue, and exercises an influence over his mistress which is none the less existent because it is not always perceptible.

He has many enemies among those who believe themselves penetrated by his keen glance, but he knows how to return them a hundred-fold the annoyances which they would like to prepare for him. A close observer, he at once guesses the wishes, hopes, and ambitious desires of all the parasites that swarm around the empress, some to obtain a good word spoken in public, others to receive a Chinese pot or a Japanese vase to decorate their parlors. The young secretary inscribes in his memory every sign of greediness, every act of baseness, every sycophancy of which he is daily the witness, and even if he does not, at the moment, make use of them against the person, he carefully stores them up in his mind. The result of these experiences is a contempt for mankind which increases every day, and which makes him the living contrast to Count Nesselrode, the chief chamberlain of the empress' court, a worthy man, too narrow-minded to seek out his neighbors' faults, and too indifferent to worldly matters to bother himself about them, whether good or bad. He is the father of a daughter, who, though not handsome, is very amiable, and of a son who is in the Uhlan Guards.

I will not close this chapter without speaking a word more about Miss von Heyndorff, the first maid-of-honor of the empress. She is really an influential person, who knows all the secrets of her sovereign, writes her private letters, superintends her commissions and imagines she is devotedly attached to her, though in reality injuring her greatly by her indiscretions and

intrigues. All the court ladies who desire to retain the friendship of the empress flatter her, while she, merely to please her vanity, allows a countess or princess to cool her heels in her ante chamber. More a friend than a maid-of-honor of her sovereign, she combines the servility of the servant with the loving and at the same time insufferable tyranny of a confidante, who knows she cannot be sent away because she is feared. The empress only sees through her eyes and allows herself to be influenced through her cunning, to such a degree, which is the more dangerous to her dignity, since Miss von Heyndorff, like all persons in such a position, has neither the tact nor the smartness to keep her position as a confidential adviser secret.

FOURTH LETTER.

THE EMPRESS' FRIENDS.

The Empress Augusta loves society and could not live without it. Her active nature is continually on the alert for some attraction, and at present, since her illness makes it impossible for her to leave her chair, she has no other distraction than the society of her intimate friends. From time immemorial she generally invited five or six persons two or three times a week to spend the evening by her. These small teas now take place daily. The emperor appears toward the close of the same for a few moments, and puts, through his presense, a little life into these parties, which are usually very solemn and during which, under the pretense to converse, one drinks tea and eats oranges. The empress tries to sustain a conversation, but this doesn't always meet with success, in face of the hauteur and sleepiness of her guests, who bore themselves to death, without admitting the fact to each other, so penetrated are they with the honor of having been invited by her majesty. It is only when the Duke and Duchess of Sagan are in Berlin that these tea-parties are infused with a little life. The duke, the type of a French nobleman of the eighteenth century, is well liked at court. He is a jovial old man, very vivacious and youthful for his age, and besides a courtier worthy of living in the reign of Louis XIV.

Understanding the art of flattering without saying too much or too little, he is witty, without being very shrewd, superficially educated, with the manners of a *grand seigneur* and possessing great knowledge of the world. His greatest pleasure is to compliment the ladies and adore crowned heads. Formerly he was quite successful with the fair sex.

To tell the truth he is a charming egotist, always of the opinion of the person he is speaking to, a little penetrated with the brilliancy of his name, position and fortune, an unrivaled giver of banquets, who sometimes makes use of his genius to invent new models for the livery of his servants. He protects and advances those who flatter him, but he will never pursue those who criticise and attack him. He is always what the occasion requires, a Frenchman in Paris, he becomes a Prussian the moment he arrives at Berlin, transforming himself into the reign-

ing Duke of Sagan in his Silesian possessions, having shortly before, on treading the ground at Valencay, metamorphosed himself into the nephew of the great Talleyrand. His wife, the widow from her first marriage of Count Maximilian von Hatzfeld, is the daughter of the celebrated Castellane. She has in a measure inherited the soldier manners of her father. The wonderfully wise and witty woman is a type one seldom sees. Her thoroughly manly manners are so outspoken that they would never be tolerated in any one but her. With great freedom of speech, she tells every one, without respect to persons, friends, enemies or relations, whatever comes into her head; no coarseness of language can frighten her in the least; she slaughters human beings with one word with the same *sang froid* with which she kills the stags and boars in her Silesian forests. It is impossible to bore oneself in her presence; she would animate a statue with life, by the way in which she would recount its faults. Nothing ridiculous escapes her, no weakness of a neighbor is spared her malicious irony.

In spite of all this she is a good woman, capable if necessary of displaying the great lady, preserving her fine manners even in her roughness, incapable of hurting any one intentionally, cruel without being wicked, and pardonable for her sarcasms through her wit. From her first marriage the duchess has six children, none of whom confer any honor upon her; from the second she possesses a daughter, Miss Dorothea von Talleyrand, who is married to the eldest son of Prince Furstenberg. This daughter is a pretty girl, who inherited her mother's intelligence but not her wit.

True to her principles of protecting the semi-strangers, the empress honors the Countess Louise von Benckendorf, widow of the Emperor Nicholas of Russia's aid-de-camp, with her especial friendship. The countess is by birth a princess of Croy. She has remained German, and the only thing Russian about her is the decoration of Saint Katherine. She is the type of a reigning sovereign such as are depicted in the Gotha peerage; her ideal is a rank at some imperial or royal court; her greatest happiness to inhale the same air as a king. She is regarded to be very smart, though in reality she is only intriguing. She is well equipped for society, since she knows every one, has traveled a great deal, and has the alpha and omega of drawing-room talk at her fingers' ends. At a dinner she fills the place of honor admirably, and therefore is well pleased that it is reserved for her. At a distance she looks like a matron of high rank—when close to her one sees a hanging mouth, from which, between two broken teeth still remaining, the spittle runs, which produces a revolting feeling. Take her all in all she is a very ambitious, proud and jealous woman, who is apt to become dangerous in case her vanity or pride is attacked. Her eldest daughter, who is married to Prince von Hatzfeld-Trachenberg, is similar to her in more than one point, but knows how to hide her faults under the charm of her youth and beauty.

One of the most fervent admirers of the Countess von Benckendorf is General Count Goltz, the brother of the former

ambassador at Paris, who enjoyed to such a high degree the favor of the Empress Eugenie. Count Goltz, one of the emperor's aid-de-camps, was, thirty years ago, one of the gilded youths of Berlin, and still pays his attentions to both old and young women, recalling in this way memories of his stormy youth. He is a brave man, who would possess intelligence if he wasn't so abstracted. As long as he keeps awake his conversation is both amusing and interesting, and he regales the empress by detailing the daily scandals that occur.

Then there is Count William von Pourtales. In former times he was very interesting; but lately, late hours, drink, and ballet dancers have done their duty and marked him with that stamp which betrays those persons prematurely old through riotous living. The count was always egotistical, amiable only to those who were useful to him, stiff and condescending to the rest of the world. At present the old beau is only a ruin, and he speaks now from habit, without knowing what he says. At night, in society, he sleeps in company with Count Goltz; but the latter, at least, keeps one eye open, so as to follow the movements of the sovereign; when he speaks his mouth repeats the same commonplace flatteries, which at one time were said with spirit, but now are spoken in such a tone that one imagines it a machine. Of his passions of former times he still retains the desire for good eating, and a rage for collecting bric-a-brac and pictures. He owns a splendid collection. His house in University street is admirably decorated and furnished. The courtyard is a little museum in itself. Nevertheless, this courtyard, with its glass covering, is the cause of one of the greatest disappointments which has ever happened to Count Pourtales. He always hoped the empress would visit him, and, to save trouble, he caused two carriage-ways to be laid out when he built his house so that the empress' carriage could turn around in the courtyard itself. But alas! in spite of the two carriage-ways, neither the count nor the architect noticed that the courtyard was too small to allow a carriage to turn around in it. The old courtier, on the completion of his house, had to give up the wish of his life. After a deluge of sighs, he determined to resign himself to his fate, wherein he was supported by his splendid cook.

Besides the persons sketched above, the little parties of the empress are visited by the Chief Master of Ceremonies, Count August Eulenburg; Chief Lord-in-Waiting, Count William von Redern; his brother and sister-in-law, and several insignificant persons.

Count Eulenburg, who, before he became chief master of ceremonies, was court-marshal of the crown prince, is a very courteous and pleasant gentleman, who, in spite of his onerous position, has made friends all over, even with those whose right of precedence he was often obliged to refuse. The office he holds is not by any means a sinecure, at least not in a country like Prussia and in a city like Berlin, where no one is anxious to secure a place, even the best one in heaven, so long as there is a German Empire in existence. In the time of Count Eulenburg's

predecessor, every court ball was the scene of constant bickerings and jealousies between envious women; the count has put an end to all this. He combines courtesy with steadfastness and knows how to command respect for his official proclamations. Careful and conscientious man, never losing command over himself, and, besides, a man of tact, he will never do anything not absolutely necessary. His intelligence is very mediocre, but he understands how to hide his deficiencies in this respect. His brother, who was for a short time minister of the interior, has more intelligence than he, but less tact and composure. His position with the crown prince, owing to the enmity of the crown princess, was a difficult one, and it is said he was heartily glad when he was called to do other duties. Count Eulenburg is married to a charming lady, who is loved and admired by all those who come in contact with her.

The Chief Lord-in-Waiting, Count William Redern, is an old gentleman seventy-five years of age, who nevertheless, is still hale and hearty, and who can be seen any day between two and four in the afternoon promenading in the park. He is a brave man, enormously rich, at one time full of vivacity and life, a great musician, thoroughly *au fait* in regard to all art matters, cordial to everybody, and in quite an eccentric way at loggerheads with his nephew and heirs, who discount the riches of their dear uncle in advance. Count William has occupied himself with literature, and a year ago published some memoirs which caused a commotion among some people, notably his brother Henry. This brother is the greatest scandal-monger that ever existed. He has no sympathy with any one, is not abashed by any sorrow he may cause and is deaf to all entreaties whenever some scandalous rumor is set afloat. He is the incarnation of a spiteful tongue and bores people besides through his stammering and endless explanations. He is despised in society as well as feared, and would not be tolerated any more were it not for his wife, by birth a Princess Odescalchi, a charming old lady, who is just the opposite of her husband. The Countess Victoria von Redern is one of the most respected women in Berlin. Her drawing-room which is open every evening is one of the few places in the county of Brandenburg where the art of conversing is understood. She combines geniality with intelligence, which, though limited, is still sufficient and is very lucid and just. Her only weakness is her extreme affection for her only son, a good-for-nothing gambler and spendthrift, who has filled all the large cities of Europe with the noise of his scandalous adventures. The countess is not blind to these facts, but nevertheless her heart is open to her wayward son.

Beyond the above named persons, the empress does not receive any one in her intimate circle. During Lent she gives concerts every Thursday to which all society persons in regular order are admitted. Her life is spent in the company of the same persons, hearing the same opinions, more or less submitting to the influences of these persons, the same vain, interesting or flattering personages, among whom some sympathetic occurrence

takes place, which, without the empress being aware of it, is poured into her ear.

FIFTH LETTER.

THE IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR.

So much has already been written and said about Prince Bismarck that it is only with extreme reluctance that I approach the subject. What can be said of a man who has in turn been described in history, legends and fables? For fifteen years the chancellor has been placed before the public gaze in every conceivable way. His politics have been held up to our admiration, his person despised, his activity as a minister looked upon with fear. Herr Büsch has even attempted to introduce us into the private life of the Colossus, and show us a Bismarck in slippers and smoking jacket. And yet none of these attempts have succeeded, and the prince is still a riddle to those persons who have attempted to form some idea of his character. Even his most intimate friends have not been able to penetrate into the secret of this wonderful man, who is great through his reason, dangerous through his genius, superior to Machiavelli in shrewdness and overshadowing Richelieu in his contempt for men.

To tell the truth, the chancellor doesn't know himself thoroughly, he doesn't know to-day what he will do on the morrow, and since years, controlling the world's affairs, he allows himself to be led by circumstances. The great secret of his success lies in the rapidity with which he changes his opinions, forsakes his friends, pays court to his enemies, and draws capital from the quarrels and bickerings of all. His elastic conscience knows no remorse, his soul has no other ambition than to have absolute power over men and things, kings and nations. It's Medea's big "I" that circulates in his life; he has seen how the fate of rulers and nations concentrated themselves in his person that he has finally gone so far as to forget that he is not yet the ruler of the whole world. This is the reason why he destroys everything which is not himself, everything which does not blindly obey him, everything which opposes or crosses his path. Once—but that is some time ago—Bismarck was ambitious for his people, anxious to secure for Prussia the first place amongst European nations—to-day this ambition has disappeared to make room for a wild desire to secure his own personal sovereignty. Just as active as he once was for his king, he is now, since that king became emperor, anxious to hinder him from taking the slightest interest in the business of the state. The German empire undoubtedly owes its existence to the courageous chancellor, who founded, strengthened and united it, but now that this colossal work is finished, he cannot persuade himself to allow it to blossom and ripen internally. He wants to retain absolute power over the empire for himself, and this in a measure explains the constant changes in the policy of this man of "blood and iron," which have so often created surprise.

Everything degenerates through constant use, and the energy of the chancellor has become obstinacy and rage. He has be-

come so accustomed to enforcing his wishes, that he thinks it his right to force all persons to bow to his will. Naturally of an aggressive disposition, which shows itself in a great many eccentric ideas, now that his favorite plans have all been fulfilled, he contents himself with following the impulses of the moment just as the occasion demands. The chancellor only governs yet because he has known how to make himself feared, and very often his opponents ascribe measures which they fear most to him, whereas in reality they themselves, without knowing it, have played thus into his hands. Nevertheless, just as he stands, the chancellor is a great historical figure, especially if seen at a distance and on the pedestal upon which future ages will place him. But, when examined closely, one discerns his smallness, his narrow-mindedness, and his forgetfulness of the interests which have been intrusted to him. Bismarck, from time immemorial, has always striven to have the world bow before him, and to attain this object he has not scrupled to employ every means in his power. One of the most formidable sides of his nature is the capacity with which he sees through people, whose weak spots he grasps at once, flatters them, draws them to his side and uses them for his own purposes. In the moment when one despises people, one is able to govern them, for only then is one able to know what one can ask or receive from them.

The prince is cynical and skeptical. As soon as he discovers that the conscience of a person is not secure, he attempts to purchase it, and in nine out of ten cases he succeeds, since men are cowards and can be bought by those who desire to have them. A great deal has been said about the extensive plans of the chancellor; his correspondence recently published was cited as an instance of how everything he has done has been calculated beforehand. For my part, I firmly believe that he has profited by circumstances, and having arrived at power, has only sought to establish his own authority. Later on his higher ambition developed itself; he remembered the dreams of his youth, and wished after his own triumphs to strengthen those of his country. Since then he has tried to surround himself with a halo of glory in the eyes of the world, by making it believe that he owes his successes not to circumstances but to previous plans which he has triumphantly carried through by reason of his invincible will-power.

Few statesmen have had so many enemies, and none has been able with so sure a hand to brush them aside. But, to tell the truth, he must be credited with the knowledge of getting rid in this way not only of his enemies; his friends must suffer the same fate exactly as soon as they begin to be bothersome to him or even wearisome. It is positive that he is terrible in his hate, ungovernable in his wrath, and pitiless in his revenge. It is known what he has been for Count Arnim, and one need only remember Herr Delbruck, Count Stolberg, Count Eulenberg—all those of his former friends and co-workers who happened to displease him, and whom, with wonderful ability, he managed to put aside, expel, destroy, in short banish forever from the political or parliamentary arena. By turns on friendly terms with

all political parties, he has used up each one of them, only to finally rob it, through its alliance with him, of all public respect; an able tactician, he understands how to make the triumph of others his own; he has the talent to continue this somewhat difficult task to the end. One of his favorite tricks is to get hold of some ambitious and spiteful aspirant, and to pretend that the latter has all the material in him for the making of a great man. The victim falls into the snare with unvarying accuracy, and, in this way, the prince has captured a certain number of "lost souls" who serve him with love and adoration, and who naively imagine that they are indispensable to him, while, in fact, they are only useful, and whom he flatters only in order to be able, later on, when he thinks it proper, to brush them from him all the more thoroughly.

His conduct toward the emperor is very peculiar. Although as a rule he pretends to have the highest respect for the venerable sovereign, he nevertheless occasionally faces him like a real autocrat. Here, too, as everywhere, he takes advantage of the weaknesses within his range. He knows how to make every sensitive chord throb in the heart of his monarch, whose love for Prussia and its glory is so honest and sincere, that he would sacrifice himself for them if necessary.

When one sees the two face to face, the chancellor's powerful figure exceeding that of his king's by almost a head's length—the question involuntarily arises, which of the two is the ruler of the other, which has served his country most; he who, in a spirit of self-denial, has known how to step into the shade, or he who has made his Fatherland great and mighty only to crush it with the weight of his own person?

The Empress Augusta could never bear the prince. In former times, in the circle of her intimate friends and favorites, she even intrigued against him; but experience soon taught her that she could not fool with such a harsh adversary. At the present moment the two enemies face each other in a condition of armed neutrality; as they cannot tear and devour each other, they watch each other at a distance—both equally determined to renew hostilities at the slightest opportunity.

Meanwhile all these passions of hate heaped up around him, these floods of execrations continually dashing against his person have not been without their influence on Prince Bismarck. They have made him a man-hater, or, at least, have filled him with disgust of worldly affairs and infused in him a marked preference for solitude. He lives like a hermit, confined within the four walls of his palace, aloof from everybody's eyes, his friends as well as his foes, only showing himself from time to time in Parliament, or approachable by a person from whom he wishes to be informed about something. In such cases he can be even amiable, gossips and becomes a sociable companion, so much so as to enchant every one who does not know him or does not guess his object. Apart from these opportunities, nobody gets a sight of the chancellor, who confines himself more and more in the bosom of his family, which, in truth, surround him with the fondest devotion.

Princess Bismarck is a good, worthy creature, very little aristocratic in her manners, but very kind-hearted and with much, if not very fine, intelligence. She has an unbounded admiration for her husband, and treats him with an affection as deep as it is sincere. At the same time she is not at all proud of her position, she is affable, though somewhat hasty, amiable toward everybody, though well aware of the enmity of this one or the hypocritical expressions of devotion of the other; she scorns the former and places no reliance on the latter.

Two sons and a daughter are the issue of this union. Of the sons, the elder, Count Herbert Bismarck, has created a great deal of gossip through his scandalous relations with a young lady, famous for her beauty and moving in the highest circles of Berlin society. He played a blameworthy part in this sad affair, and showed himself equally selfish, cruel, and weak. He is very vain and very much busied with his own person; conceited to the last degree on account of being the son of the imperial chancellor, and, otherwise, as is almost always the case with great men's sons, as insignificant as his father is remarkable. In society he is flattered and bowed to on account of his suppositious influence, and the song in *La Fontaine's* fable about the raven with the cheese in its beak is continually being sung to him: "Good-morning, Mr. Raven! How beautiful you are and how lovely you sing!" Unfortunately, for these poor flatterers, it is not Count Herbert who has the cheese in his bill.

His brother, Count William Bismarck, is more serious and deliberative. He has less brilliancy in his manner, but a more solid foundation. He loves to travel and has political convictions that he very well knows how to apply, but with which he will never become anything higher than an excellent official. In appearance he resembles his father in mind and nature, apart from a certain impetuosity in his dislikes inherent in all of the Schoenhausens, he is more like his mother.

Their sister, Countess Marie Bismarck, married, after her chosen bridegroom had died, Count Rantzan, an attache in the ministry of foreign affairs. She is the favorite of the chancellor from whom she has inherited her intelligence. Her mind is very active and comprehensive, and, like her father, the Countess Rantzan possesses the gift to see through people and the inclination to make fun of them.

SIXTH LETTER.

THE IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR AND THE MINISTRY.

THE Prussian ministry consists of a body of men who amount to nothing. It is a small collection of officials, who, in the eyes of the public, possess minister-portfolios, but in those of Herr von Bismarck are only higher employees shouldered with a little more responsibility than their subordinates and allowed a little more initiative proceedings than their inferior heads of bureaus or departments. The role apportioned to them is that of subordination; their duty consists in executing the orders given them

without ever taking them into consideration. They are a little more than servants and are much, very much below the rank of confidants. They dare not contradict the chancellor.

It is their duty to defend him, to relieve him of all care, for which they must, on the other hand, at any moment suffer his reproaches and expect to be discharged the moment anything displeases their master. In a word, they are the victims of an absolute will, victims, not even worth the trouble to decorate for the sacrificial altar, for the prince treats with the utmost contempt what takes place at their meetings—he annihilates them with one blow of his club, and kicks the corpse out of his way.

The first indispensable condition to become minister to Prussia nowadays is the art of being able to work without consideration of reward. The second to be ready at any moment to bear responsibilities which have not been assumed. Besides, one must be pliable and yielding; must be endowed with a particular amount of intelligence, not too little, and, under no consideration, too large; must be able, and not too scrupulous, to draw advantage from the inexperience of others; and finally, one must not follow his own ideas, but those which have their origin in the shadow of Wilhelm street or in the solitude of Varzin. To sum up, one must entirely surrender his own individuality and become a machine, and that, too, a machine in the narrowest sense of the word without ever forgetting, even to himself, that he is playing only the role of a simple instrument. It is obvious that it is not always an easy matter for Herr von Bismarck to obtain such assistants. He often believed he had found them, but some opposition on their part soon showed him that if the blindly ambitious and narrow-minded are plentiful in this world, those who prefer to act according to their own ideas and on their own responsibility are more numerous still. In recent times he, therefore, saw himself obliged to look for people whose social and pecuniary position was so shaken that once in his hands, not the slightest inclination could seize them to withdraw from his dictates or from the expressions of his will. In a word, he had to be careful to surround himself not with collaborators but with menials, whose livery is as brilliant as their deliberations are empty.

The men who, at present, form the Prussian ministry are nothing but supernumeraries who do not desire individual roles and who make as little commotion in their offices as in society, where they are seldom seen and, if seen, hardly noticed. Only a single one among them, the secretary of war, has a definite individuality. He is an independent member of this cabinet of slaves, and naturally a constant and intensely keen thorn in the chancellor's side. But the army is the only thing the emperor has taken under his personal protection; it is a sacred thing which no one, not even Prince Bismarck, dare touch. The old ruler, body and soul a soldier, has always taken his soldiers' part; he has protected, supported and shielded them with his imperial authority. Neither the schemes, nor the arguments, nor Herr von Bismarck's open attacks have ever met with the least success on this point; the emperor is the sole master and

ruler over his army, and the secretary of war is responsible to no one for his determinations and decisions but to the emperor himself. The natural consequence of this is an abnormal condition which makes this position an extremely difficult one to occupy. A cabinet, in which all stand for one always extricates itself out of any embarrassment; but a secretary who apparently depends on the prime minister, but is, in reality, independent of him, is always in a painful and complicated position. Count Roon, in his time, knew very well how to tack between these manifold difficulties.

Besides, at the time when he was in the height of his power, the chancellor's greed for authority and despotism had not yet, like to-day, reached its utmost limits. General von Roon's successor, General von Kameka, already had his hands full to maintain his place against the prince, who, nevertheless, obliged him to resign, after long years of silent but merciless combat. The present Secretary of War, General Bronsart von Schellendorf, occupies his position for too short a time for any one to form an opinion how long he will remain in it. For this reason I will say nothing more about him, except that his appointment evoked joy in certain circles, rage in others, astonishment in all; for the mass of people who form their opinion according to what they see, and not according to what goes on behind the scenes, had expected an entirely different selection. The appointment of Count Paul Hatzfeld, on the other hand, to the position of Secretary of Foreign Affairs surprised none. People were prepared for it in advance, and the only cause of surprise, if any, was the tardiness with which the thing was done. This slowness, this hesitancy to give Count Hatzfeld the title of the position, the official duties of which he already performed, had its cause in the condition of the pecuniary circumstances of the new secretary. He was over head and ears in debt, and could not possibly maintain his rank in regard to foreign relations with the proper dignity, as long as he was in such serious financial embarrassments. The chancellor, who perfectly well knew these particular circumstances, became Herr von Hatzfeld's rescuing angel. The count had always been one of his favorites. He obtained from the count's principal creditor, the banker Bleichroder, a release of a part of the latter's claims, or, at least, an extension of time to enforce them, and thus brought it about that the count could lead a life, if not exactly free of all pecuniary cares, at any rate free of material bonds. Naturally this life was henceforth entirely devoted to the service of his lord and master.

People, perhaps, believe what Count Hatzfeld says, but place no reliance in his promises, for the reason, no doubt, because they have a suspicion that he is not the man to respect them himself, much less to defend them against so threatening a chief. He is, nevertheless, a favorite in society, in which one does not bother about the morality of the past life of him who is welcomed there, provided he occupies an acknowledged position. His ingenuous manner makes everybody think well of him, and his inherent indifference and easy-going nature have

gained for him many friends. As a public man he amounts to nothing; in private life, he has the right to claim a certain number of things in his favor, without, however, meriting more than the commonplace sympathy which every well-brought-up man obtains who whiles away ten minutes of our time in agreeable conversation. Count Paul was married to a very beautiful woman, an American, from whom he is divorced, and who is now surrounded by numerous admirers. Among the latter may often be seen Count von Hatzfeld himself, who pays her his addresses with such perfect ease, that I have caught myself, at some romantically inclined moments, wishing him renewed success with all my heart.

Count Hatzfeld is one of those personages often met with among high diplomatic dignitaries, that is to say, a believer in the axiom that the end sanctifies the means, and a man of no scruples at all when things lie so that he can draw a personal advantage from them.

Neither good nor bad, although of a certain elegant corruption, ambitious more for fortune than for fame, well-informed without being exactly educated, intellectual without being thorough, and amiable through habit, he is highly agreeable as a man of the world, but very risky, even dangerous, as a statesman. He fills his place wonderfully; knows as well how to receive the ambassadors with a seductive smile, as to escort them out with an affable farewell salute; never permits the expression of a decided opinion to escape him; claims to read no papers and to hate politics, and exerts himself with all this, in all innocence, to produce the impression of an extremely smart man.

In reality he himself is much more the deceived than he deceives others, for, although Herr von Bismarck permits him to execute his plans to the end, he surely does not do him the honor to confide his real motives and objects to him.

The count will never have the authority in the eyes of the representatives of the foreign powers which his predecessor, Herr von Bulow had.

There is nothing to say about the other secretaries, as they do not represent either a power, an opinion or even any individuality. They are very active, each in his own department, attend with the greatest care to the business of their respective offices, and do not interfere in any of the great questions of general politics, in which, in fact, they are very little interested. They are model bureaucrats, unable to injure the great work in which they participate, but equally unable to manage it alone, to control it and to bring it to a successful end. They are nothing but minor forces, or, more properly speaking, persons of special utility. But what will become of all these automatons the day when the skillful hand, which at present endows them with life and motion, will no longer lend them the vitality which their own strength does not afford them? The chancellor's main policy to surround himself with ciphers, who draw their existence only from him and who work only for his glory, has enabled him to execute all his plans without the slightest objection; it has given the general soldiers, who obey him abso-

lutely and blindly. But, on the other hand, Herr von Bismarck's tyranny has this disadvantage for Germany, that it has exterminated every talent which might be capable, at some time, to replace the colossus to which it has at present unconditionally surrendered. The prince is the living incarnation of a system, a policy, a government, in short, of everything which forms a nation's life and vital organs.

If the colossus disappears some day, the German Empire will, no doubt, continue to exist. But of him who bore it only the clay feet will be left.

SEVENTH LETTER.

THE PARLIAMENT.

It is wonderful to observe with what skill Prince Bismarck knows how to tack here and there between all the cliffs of parliamentary life in Germany. One would almost imagine that he had made a secret compact with Satan, when one sees the art and manner in which he triumphs over all obstacles, overcomes the hatred of all his opponents, and regularly forces those people to vote "ay" who before were apparently determined to vote "nay." These uninterrupted triumphs are in part due to the chancellor's unparalleled shrewdness, but they are mainly caused by the want of really existing parties and by the entire absence of patriotism which marks the German Imperial Parliament.

In fact, if we closely examine the different fractions of which this parliament is composed, we will not be able to resist the conviction that not one of them has comprehended the true significance of the word, "Fatherland." This is the reason why they are led, ruled and crushed by the mighty form of the chancellor, who is, perhaps, the only man in all Prussia who can appreciate the greatness of his work, and who is so identified with it that the day on which he will disappear, he will take it along with him in his grave.

Of the three great parties which divide the Parliament—the Conservative, the National-Liberal and the Center—the first mentioned is powerless on account of the entire dependence in which the government holds it, the second is discredited, like all who did not know how to draw advantage from the success of the moment, and the third is being misled by a leader dazzled by a secret and unconfessed ambition. Of this leader I will speak more further on. None of these three parties, as I will try to prove, is able to defy anybody, least of all Prince Bismarck.

The Conservatives are mainly composed of the large Protestant and Catholic land-owners. They very well know that their position prevents them from acting with the Liberals, and they therefore believe that they can serve their own interests best by renouncing every initiative, every opinion of their own. They occasionally make a harmless protest to quiet the consciences of their constituents, but always, or almost always, vote with the chancellor. It is a party consisting partly of honest but feeble men, of persons without faith or belief, of impecunious aspirants,

and partly, also, of confessed blockheads, who wish to become something at any price. The government makes a great show in public in regard to having this party as an ally, and from time to time distributes some favors among it, in order to make it its accomplice. It is the honorary guard which furnishes the accompaniment to Bismarck's decisions, and which he, in turn, sometimes as a whole, sometimes in its individual adherents, flatters, praises and pets. The majority of the Conservatives owe their election to the local influence which each nobleman or simple landed proprietor exercises over his domain; their canvass is supported by the government, which sees in them willing tools and which, in the end, it has entirely in its grasp. The Prussian nobility has so greatly degenerated, is so poor and has so often attempted to enrich itself in a way which cannot be more closely indicated, that it is obliged, through force of circumstances, to lean for support on the state and to shelter itself under its powerful protection as under a cloak. Stroussberg, "the railroad king," as he was called in Berlin, has quite a number of parliamentary votes on his conscience, votes which were snatched from his victims with force—a force having Herr von Bismarck's features. The prince—who sufficiently despises mankind to be able to say that every conscience is purchasable provided you offer the proper price—has known how to fish, with the greatest skill, in the muddy waters in which so many dukes and princes went under. He bought their souls, by saving them from ruin and shame, and leaving their skins in the hands of the Jewish bankers, his dearmorganatic friends. Evil tongues allege—though we have heard no proof of it—that he recently in this way gained a secretary who exceeds all the rest in docility, who has to execute all his commands, submit to all his tempers, and even, if it need be, allow himself to be kicked. He dare not protest against this ill treatment, nor allow himself the slightest scruples of conscience, for fear of being at once delivered over, bound hand and foot, to Herr von Bismarck's financial executioner, whom, it is said, he owes enormous sums, and who spares him only out of regard to and by the order of the chancellor.

And just like this secretary's situation is that of other much more aristocratic and better-born gentlemen, as, for instance, certain dukes whose estates would long ago have been sequestered were it not for the intervention of the crown. All of them are now paying their debts from their seats in Parliament, and are besides overwhelmed with tokens of honor.

These are only a few of the many examples how things are among the Conservatives, but they are sufficient to show the humiliating insignificance of this party. Other members thereof, the secretly ambitious, support the government to become secretaries. To these belong Count Udo Stolberg and Prince von Hatzfeld-Trachenberg, cousin of Count Paul. The former is, without doubt, a man of intelligence, but in spite of that without political comprehension, and is, besides, dissatisfied with his position as a younger son. The latter, a wealthy Silesian landowner, is pushed into prominence by his wife, in whose veins

flows the blood of one of the princely families of the *Almanach de Gotha*, and who possesses all the family pride. She is the moving power which pushes her husband forward, for the apathy and incompetency of this "solid, high conservative party" are so great that its members must absolutely be put in motion by love, fear, ambition or self-interest. What a sad picture of a vanishing, moribund aristocracy! Unable, any longer, to accomplish anything by its own strength, it tries to keep itself on its legs, by clinging to a power and greatness it envies and hates. It even occasionally conspires against it, and is continually grumbling about it, and yet it cannot exist without it, and, in the end, blindly follows because it fears it.

The National Liberals have had a programme. But this programme was indefinite and vacillating like the party itself. Its members were at one time the best friends of the chancellor. Who, indeed, is there in Prussia who hasn't been at one time a friend of the chancellor? They supported him in his struggle against the papacy and in other matters, but they made the egregious mistake of imagining that he couldn't get along without them. This mistake caused them to lose their existence. There are no persons absolutely necessary to Bismarck. He only knows such people whom he can at some time or other use. He is always making promises, but never keeps them. How many persons are there not who, at one time, his most devoted admirers are now his worst enemies; such as Lasker, Bamberger, and Benningsen, all men of talent, who became obnoxious to him, and whom he cast off. These men at one time thought they had power in their hands; they have undoubtedly had a taste of it, but there is, unfortunately, a great difference between fancied and real power. Besides this the National Liberals are deserving of very little sympathy. They are not really liberal, though some of them lean toward socialism. They are not royalists. Bankers and stock speculators as the majority of them are, they only look out for their own interests. They are enthusiastic for a united Germany, which would be of service to them. They combat the principle of proprietorship, but defend their own property. They attack the aristocracy, but are not averse to a title for themselves. They are conservative in respect to what is their own, but radical toward others. In spite of all this they formed, up to a few years, a powerful party. Their former power is gone to-day, first, because the chancellor has turned his back upon them; secondly, because the people have lost faith in them, and finally, because their principal leaders have withdrawn from the party, either through listlessness or disappointed ambition.

One leader only is still at the front, namely Eugene Richter, and he is beginning to be less talked about than formerly. It won't be very long before the National Liberals, who lost a great deal of their footing at the last election, will become an insignificant faction in the chamber. And yet they possessed men of genius and talent, and great political foresight. What they lacked was the ability to use these great faculties properly. The hour of their doom struck at the right time, but they did not notice it.

It was Bismarck who used and tricked them. Their part on the political stage is played out, a thing of the past. They are no longer sufficiently numerous to form a majority and content themselves with a constant opposition to the chancellor to enrage him, by recalling the past to his memory. They are still admired for their oratorical talents. But the voice which so often told the nation truths to its face, is no longer heeded. What injures them also is their tendency for visionary things. They are not free from social dreams—but the German only permits dreams of a poetical kind. He is ready to allow you to thirst after the ideal *a la* Werther—but one must not be led astray by the same. One must not busy himself with the people, the workman, the one who labors and suffers and who, according to the ideas of those who govern Prussia to-day, is fit only to become a soldier.

The Center is undoubtedly the most powerful party in the legislature to-day, although it also has not a majority by itself. But it is the most suitable, the most compact, and at times the most foolish. It has no political reason, but is entirely personal. Its opposition is only obstinacy. Its oratory would be more at home in the pulpit than in the legislative chamber.

It is composed of men of great talent who use their power for their own good or else try to do impossible things. It wasn't for nothing that the leader of this party, Herr von Windthorst, was once prime minister of Hanover. He has brought this weakness for a minister's portfolio along with him to Prussia, and hopes Bismarck will appoint him to the position. Perhaps he himself does not thoroughly comprehend the extent of his aspirations, but he cherishes them, and no matter how secret he keeps it, he often says to himself: "When I succeed I will be big, and they must reckon with me." This secret thought lends a certain indefiniteness to his actions. He has not given his followers any positive policy to follow, allowing them to accede or dissent just as the occasion should suggest. Through his opposition, in 1878, he caused the defeat of the Socialist bill, whose passage was absolutely necessary, and it was only by dissolving Parliament and the feeling of resentment caused by the attempted assassinations of Hodel and Nobiling that the bill became a law. In place of this he voted in 1883 for a biennial budget, which was a great mistake. Why did he do this? Because the chancellor intimated to him that he would attempt to bring about a reconciliation with the Vatican, and he did not wish to be accused of not supporting the government when so much was at stake. And what happened then? The chancellor had merely broached a reconciliation whilst the Center had really granted a biennial budget. This unfortunate budget affair, more than anything else, disclosed the lack of patriotism which reigns in the German Parliament. It is a positive fact that they were all aware of the danger to the country of a biennial budget, and from the time of the emperor's last rescript to the chamber up to the month of April, they had vowed over and over again not to vote for the measure, believing that the country would decide against the government at every new election.

And yet—three months after these solemn demonstrations and without changing their opinions, they all voted for the despised budget merely because Herr von Windthorst suddenly discovered the shadow of a portfolio winking at him in the distance, and he said to himself, “To the dickens with the nation, so long as the Vatican, which we represent, succeeds.” And yet, since then neither the Vatican nor the gentlemen of the Center have succeeded. They could have surmised that a man of steel like the chancellor never gives in. Whenever the occasion comes when he really desires to make peace with Rome, he will do it without the services of Parliament or the Center. But momentarily he has no such idea. It pleases him to attach this bait to his hook and he hopes to catch still larger fish with it. If the Center desired to follow a loyal, honest, and at the same time effective policy, it should either join forces entirely with Bismarck and stop attacking him in its organs, or else openly challenge him and combine with the Liberals to defeat such obnoxious measures as biennial budgets. But these Catholics are far from having such a high standard of honor. They can only indulge in lamentations and excommunications. A reasonable, shrewd policy is an impossibility to them. They are too much occupied with their own interests.

It is unnecessary to speak of the other factions in the chamber. The Poles obstinately stick to their one stand-point of attack. The Socialists are good orators. The Alsace-Lorraine party is of no account. These three elements are alike of no consequence, but they at least never hurt their own cause, whether on account of the justness of it or else because no one thinks it worthy of attack, it is impossible to say.

As for the Parliament, as a whole, it is composed, as I have shown, of a number of ambitious men, a few dreamers, a crowd of dunces, some really talented men, and a certain class of men who think it only necessary to have received a decoration to be able to govern the world. On the whole, Parliament has formed peculiar illusions about its importance and worth. It thinks itself a legislative assembly, and is nothing more than a meeting room. It pretends to exist under a constitutional government, whereas there is no such thing at all. It believes it is following its own inclinations when it accedes to a request contained in the emperor's rescripts, whereas, in reality, it submits to the will of an absolute monarch. It is unaware of its own strength and never makes use of it. It is nothing but a cover for a despotic government, which is even more despotic than that of Russia, since in the latter country it is not based on the will of one man as in Germany, but upon established facts. This Parliament will always be a willing tool in the hands of power, so long as Bismarck is at the head of affairs. The latter is without dispute a master in the art of probing hearts, fostering ambitious hopes, flattering the mighty, causing the vacillating to become firm and finally through cunning, shrewdness, energy and will-power, of becoming the guardian and master of consciences through purchase.

This is a fact. This incapable, unpatriotic Parliament is op-

posed to a gigantic power, viz., Bismarck, whose formidable figure is covered by the throne, which serves him as a shield. And it is certainly to the emperor's credit that he has protected his powerful minister, in face of all opposition. It is true, though, that owing to the services he sometimes renders to the chancellor, he imagines he is exercising the power which in reality is done by the former. Nevertheless, it must be considered as a great thing for him to acknowledge the superiority of another, especially when that other holds an inferior position. Bismarck has really succeeded in his plans to establish an absolute monarchy. There is no cabinet in Prussia answerable for its acts to any one; there is neither a parliament, nor any other thing, generally looked on as a factor in constitutional governments. There is nothing but the chancellor, who combines in himself the ruler, the representatives, the people, the administration—in fact, everything. He has tyrannized Germany so much that it is a question whether, on the day Bismarck dies, the people will know how to govern themselves.

Just now every one flatters him, hoping to secure a favor from the powerful man, while he laughs at the world and despises it, and—shrewder than Richelieu—does not condescend to have his political opponents executed, content with making them ridiculous in the eyes of the people. He destroyed Lasker, let Delbrück slide and got Beningsen out of the way. He is now attempting to serve Windthorst with a like fate, flattering him at first, holding out false hopes to him and creating ambitious desires within him. He rules just as much as he reigns. Germany will one day have to pay dearly for the honor of having had him, and at the same time the most incompetent Parliament that ever existed at the head of its affairs. The *fusillade* will revenge Europe, for what now represents Prussia's glory will then be her ruin. It cannot go unpunished, for one man to absorb all the life and vitality of a nation. Sooner or later the time will come when this nation will have to suffer for the scarcity of great leaders, and if Prince Bismarck has known how to triumph over six parliaments with the same old methods, if he has made his country big and has forced himself to be looked upon as the arbitrator of the world, he has also laid the foundation for the annihilation of this country, in destroying all those who would have been able to continue his work.

EIGHTH LETTER.

THE IMPERIAL CHANCELLOR AND THE CONFEDERATION.

In the year 1870, when the new German Empire was founded, some objections were raised. The small princes who elected King William as their emperor at Versailles, did not do so without a great deal of grumbling, and in spite of their enthusiasm they would much rather not have been obliged to make this demonstration.

Bismarck, with his shrewdness and genius, took in the situation long before the victims, was prepared for the secret rage of the little sovereigns of Germany, and his proposition to estab-

lish the so-called "confederation," was merely done to sweeten the bitter pill. This body, which recalled memories of the North German Confederation, was called into existence to allow the shadow kings who bowed before the feet of Prussia, to imagine that they would be allowed to take part in the government of their states. In reality this confederation is only a gigantic illusion; just as the Parliament and the cabinet. The confederation is only another instrument in the hands of the chancellor, who rules it at will. Established as a factor in the government, it has become a machine, in whose name some one else governs. All its members, whether creatures of Bismarck or his enemies, are too awkward to be dangerous, or too insignificant to be troublous. The whole thing is simply an artistic stage effect—that's all. The audience which looks at the stage through an opera glass, fondly supposes that everything has been admirably arranged, that the trees are real, and the fountains play real water, but the minute one puts foot on this same stage and walks about it, one very soon discovers the mistake one has been laboring under. The duty of the confederation is to carry out the chancellor's decisions. It also serves him as a lightning-rod whenever he desires to propose a bill to the chamber, to which he knows it is opposed and cannot be spared if he wishes to defeat some law which the chamber passes. In the first instance, it is the duty of the confederation to pretend to assert its rights, and in the second to accept all the blame. Nothing is more amusing than to see Bismarck in these cases confiding to friendly representatives the grief and sorrow caused him by the obstinacy of his colleagues in the confederation.

He plays his comedy so often that one cannot help asking what he would do if he hadn't this scapegoat. In such a case it almost seems as if he would often become gravely embarrassed were it not, as we know, that he is a man of such varied resources that should the confederation prove unfaithful to him, he would soon discover something else. Besides this, the latter does not deceive itself with regard to the part it plays. In this respect it possesses more intelligence than the Parliament, which still imagines it has a voice in the affairs of Germany. The members of the confederation know that their whole consists in blindly obeying the advice given them. This is the reason why it never gives forth an opinion, and in the face of the greatest cause for doing so, never takes the initiative in anything. Its official position is summed up in the words obeying and conforming. They do not represent their sovereigns, but live from the quantity of amiability which flatters their self-love and vanity, in the same way in which the sovereigns themselves are merely shadows; they do the functions of shadows for these shadows in the horrible farce, in which the chancellor as everywhere plays the principal part.

In Germany very little importance is attached to the confederation. Ambitious people sneer at it, intelligent people despise it, the sensible ones think it entirely useless. All are unanimous in saying it has no dignity and no policy and if it

has any reason for being in existence, it has none just now where its influence is null, its role a purely passive one and its opinions vague, vacillating and modeled after those of its master. Nevertheless every one tries to preserve it, wherefore I do not know, for all the good it does does not amount to a row of pins. Still it represents a principle, one of those rare principles which, if carefully concealed, would never be openly attacked by Bismarck, and it is for this reason that all Germany finds it necessary to put the confederation in a glass case through which it can be admired at leisure. When I use the word admire it is a wrong expression. One must, on the contrary, criticise it when talking about the confederation or occupying oneself with its affairs, which happens very rarely indeed. The German generally knows very little about politics. He is proud of the triumphs of his country, but brutally proud, like the Indian who rejoices at the number of scalps he has in his belt. He is rude to his enemies and egotistical with his friends. And while proud of the height attained by his country, has never given himself the trouble to ascertain the causes which produced it. The only sentiment he really feels is a thirst for rapacity and absolute dominion; he would like to have the whole world peopled with Germans. His only desire is to enforce his supremacy all over the globe. Outside of this nothing excites him, nothing interests him, nor does ought else draw him from his daily pursuits.

He therefore takes no part in the way he is governed and does not discuss anything with the exception of a few people who are drawn into the political vortex. This little bunch of patriots neither admires nor esteems the confederation, but submits to its existence, in the the same way it bows to the dictates of the chancellor, viz., with, a stoic resignation based on the ground that there is nothing to be done momentarily against the irresistible force of circumstances.

Among the nullities who compose the federal council two men distinguish themselves from the others, one of them through his loyal fidelity, the other by reason of his cynical wit: Herr von Nostitz Walwitz, the representative of Saxony, and Comt Lerchenfeld, the Bavarian minister. Herr von Nostitz is a diplomat of the old school. He is one of those men who make up in common sense what they lack in brilliancy, in intelligence what they lack in wit. He is always very calm, very reserved and very polite, never venturing an opinion on any subject, possesses prudence, tact and *sang froid*. Up to the present time he has succeeded in keeping on good terms with the chancellor though not without trouble. His position is that of a watch dog. He knows very well they would like to devour both him and his country and that they still regret the *quasi* independence of Saxony. And in spite of this, he is obliged daily to hear deceitful tender words, simulate himself a friendship he is permitted not to believe in himself. Herr von Nostitz feels the part he plays keenly, knows they would like to reduce Saxony still more and is perfectly satisfied that he is only tolerated through necessity, but being unable to change these things he

resigns himself to his fate and only essays to conduct himself with dignity. He rarely attacks or disputes any of the chancellor's plans; he only does so when he feels able to bring a big majority to his side.

Ordinarily he approves the resolutions submitted to him, and through circumspection sometimes does not care to use the influence he could have. He lives on good terms with his colleagues of the council as well as with the members of the diplomatic corps, among whom his wife is equally appreciated. Madame de Nostilz is an amiable person, benevolent, affable, very distinguished in appearance, who with more wit than her husband, has sometimes less coolness and repose, a very important thing for both in their position.

Count Hugo von Lerchenfeld, the Bavarian minister, does not resemble his Saxon colleague. He is still a young man, almost too young in fact, for the important position he holds. This position he obtained through the intervention of Count Herbert von Bismarck, with whom he became acquainted in Vienna. The latter recommended him to his father as a person who would become devoted to him. The chancellor remembered the information given him by his son, and when the Bavarian government (whose last two representatives at Berlin were almost expelled in consequence of famous scandals), when the Bavarian government, I say, made an inquiry with the prince what person would be most agreeable to him to be accredited to the court of Prussia, he immediately named Count Lerchenfeld, who has since been able to maintain himself in the favor of his redoubtable protector. Personally the count is very agreeable. He is well brought up, educated, has a great deal of wit, vast tact, and, as a man of the world, is a charming companion. He has traveled a great deal and appropriated the good and bad qualities of all the countries he has visited.

He is very ambitious, sometimes intriguing, a man who can always be led, for he has no convictions or scruples except those contained in the ten commandments and the existing laws. He hasn't even any vices; his heart is a stone, his passions are confined to his own person; he has never hated nor loved any one. He has simply served some people and made use of others, flattered those he needed and abandoned those for whom he has no more use. He hasn't even been ungrateful, his nature being essentially one of those who ignore the signification of the word gratitude. He has confined himself to having his pathway watered by others, so as to prevent any dust arising, accepting this service as something due him.

His devotion to the chancellor is great, but it is to his rank as prince and not to his person. Herr von Lerchenfeld is thoroughly well up in politics, but takes as little interest in it as possible. He is too careful of his future to compromise it by risking an opinion. His motto should be: *Pro me*.

Nevertheless, in spite of, or rather on account of, his defects, he is a man who will always be happy, who will succeed in the career he has chosen, who will always please and who, in consequence of his careless egotism, will make his way in the world

better than one who is embarrassed by a storeful of passions, convictions and dreams, in short, of all those sentimentalities which the public of the nineteenth century has voted out of fashion. In our times no one can succeed who does not combine amiability with cynicism, indifference to what is thought of you, with a desire to reach every idea no matter at what cost. Count Lerchenfeld possesses these characteristics, and what is more he knows how to make use of them.

There is nothing to be said of the other members of the confederation, all are similar to each other, one is worth as much as the other, and they are equally led by Prince Bismarck and treated with the same indifference by the people. One, only, the representative of Baden, Baron Turckheim, is the object of the tenderest solicitude on the part of the emperor and his family on account of his august sovereign the Grand Duchess Louise of Baden, who is the only daughter of King William. The baron is a small man, very honest and very tranquil, inoffensive, whose greatest fault is an aversion to soap and water, things which are generally dispensed with by savages, but are ordinarily appreciated by civilized persons.

NINTH LETTER.

PRUSSIA'S POLICY.

IN my position as an old diplomat, you desire me to give you my views in regard to general politics. Do not look for extended views on this point, as I shall confine myself to a few pages. Diplomatic questions can hardly be touched upon in the limited space of a letter, and besides you have not yet reached the age where people become excited over politics. It is a thing one interests oneself later on, at that epoch, as La Rochefoucauld says, in which life becomes congealed. You are still at the point where one only sees the fact without seeking the causes or circumstances, often insignificant in themselves, which have provoked them. Nevertheless you are curious to know my opinion of an alliance between Prussia and Russia, or even about the cordial union which appears to exist between the courts of Vienna and Berlin.

I haven't the leisure to enumerate a thousand little details which would prove to you that this union and this understanding between them are only and ever will be expedients and strongly recall the lies Frederick the Second used to avail himself of, not without success, I confess. Before Frederick the Second and already at the time of the great Elector, the policy of Prussia was always to simulate friendships and form dupes. Thanks to this system, sagaciously conducted and ingeniously pursued, she has arrived, little by little, or rather her princes have been able to impose themselves on Europe and forced her to bow before the former vassal of Poland. It is well to observe that this greatness was not caused by the efforts or bravery of the people, but was the work of a few men, who during several generations have pursued the same object and in whom the entire nation is personified. The German generally and the Prussian in particular

has a blind faith in the energy of the House of Hohenzollern. The nature of the German is soft, good-hearted at bottom, ferocious at times and by fits, indolent and apathetic, capable of perseverance, but not of taking the initiative. The Prussian pushes to the limit the spirit of obedience, but he has not the art of ordering anything which he hasn't been ordered himself to do. He is born to be a soldier, has all a soldier's enthusiasm, loves to conquer, is wonderfully desirous of possessing another's property, takes what he has not but does not confess it. Not able to have the moral qualities he is ambitious for, he regards them with horror in a neighbor and on account of that, positively desires to assimilate himself with his neighbor, hoping to profit by some miraculous transfusion.

The convictions and sympathies of the German people have been wonderfully realized by the reigning family.

It has taken the word "Conquer" as a motto, and slowly, with premeditation and energy has applied itself to satisfying the voracious appetite which distinguishes the Teutonic race. This explains why since nearly 100 years, Prussia's policy has appeared to be so able, so constant in its aim, and why it has in reality been so vacillating, uniting herself with those she had to combat with the same facility with which she combats those with whom she unites. It is a policy exempt from prejudices, indifferent to every system, and entirely selfish. The Hohenzollerns would have looked upon the aim pursued by Richelieu to humble Austria, as a weakness. Prussia has never comprehended power other than that founded upon great territorial possessions. She has always been dominated by envy, jealousy, vengeance, by the worst feelings of humanity. The Hohenzollerns have always had the conviction that they were called by God to raise up a people whose instincts they have corrupted without elevating their character. Prussia's policy from time immemorial has been to flatter and then abandon those who have innocently confided in her protestations of friendship and devotion. She knew how to cause France to forget her vigilance in 1866, acquire Russia's sympathies in 1870, conciliate England at the Berlin Congress, and attach Austria to her one year later through an alliance. Her plan has always been to excite one nation against the other, or else provoke internal disturbances from which she draws profit. It is in this way she gloried in the annexation of Bosnia and of the Herzegovina to the House of Habsburg, and contributed with all the power at her disposal in creating Bulgaria, with the aid of which she is able to irritate the nerves of the St. Petersburg cabinet and can one day reopen the eternal Oriental question.

She wishes to have a hand in everything merely from egotism and never by reason of any higher ambition. She is intriguing but redoubtable, for she is not susceptible to any enthusiasm, is inaccessible to pity, and bases her policy upon the coldest, most exact and un pitying calculation. She is never more dangerous than at the moment she appears to be well disposed toward her neighbors; she is most to be dreaded when she professes to be in favor of peace. Much has been said about the

union which exists between the courts of Prussia and Russia. It has even been said that since the death of Alexander II. these relations have become strained. I believe this is false, at least in regard to Russia, which, in spite of what certain papers say, hasn't the sense to know the danger it is running. At Berlin, on the other hand, they wish to regain the sympathies of Alexander III., in the first place, to prevent a union between him and France, and then to provoke Russia against Austria, which they are beginning to find embarrassing. You will be tempted to deny these statements, but if you observe events with care you will find that what I state is correct. An intense rivalry exists since a long time between the Hohenzollerns and the Habsburgs. The first named have already succeeded in snatching from the latter the diadems of Charlemagne and Barbarossa, but still are envious of the imperial title they are forced to divide with them and cannot accustom themselves to that rival empire with whom they must reckon.

Their dream is to confine the heirs of Marie Theresa to Hungary, and to absorb in the great German country the Austrian provinces. This dream they will one day realize, for they do not yet know what defeat is; then they will abandon Russia, who will have unconsciously loaned her aid, and will believe themselves to be the masters of Europe and of the world, until a coalition of all the other powers will awaken them from their proud sleep; even then they will, perhaps, be able to avert new perils, for they are as shrewd as they are strong. But, you will ask me, is there not a means of arresting the extension of a power which menaces all the European nations? Alas! my young friend, I see no remedy. In every age the barbarians have triumphed, and brutal force has always overcome intelligence, genius, wit, elegance, and the charm of civilized life. The old Roman empire itself could not resist the shock of the Teuton hordes, and how can you expect our present society to sustain it? Fraternity is ignored in our times, and people no longer know how to unite against the common enemy. The only thing which would be able to distract the attention of Prussia would be to abandon Austria to her, the object of her secret desires, on the condition that she returns Alsace-Lorraine to France, and permits Russia to take possession of Constantinople; but it would require a Richelieu to bring such a conception to a favorable ending, and we have not even a Mazarin in all Europe. Besides, England would be always opposed to such a project, and no one is strong enough to close her mouth.

On the other hand France does not take sufficient interest in politics to weigh in the European equilibrium, and Russia does not understand her own interests sufficiently to be able to seize this consideration and conclude an alliance with the common enemy. I cannot see, therefore, any obstacle in the future to the continuation nor even to the extension of Germany's power, unless Providence should send her a sovereign who could comprehend the real interests of the country better than his predecessors had, and who would apply himself to the task of establishing his supremacy by a noble use of his power, and who, above all,

will understand that the largest tree can be overturned by a tempest if it stands alone and solitary, while it would run less danger if standing in a forest, whose friendly branches could protect it from the cyclone. But I perceive that what I am saying are dreams, and I will stop for fear that you will sneer at my gray hairs and silly diplomatic dreams.

TENTH LETTER.

HERR VON WINDTHORST AND THE CATHOLICS.

I HAVE already spoken of this leader and his party in my letter on the Parliament; to-day I wish to give you a light sketch of the man, as also of his adherents.

Herr von Windthorst is a personality curious to study either physically or morally. His fine, intelligent, sympathetic countenance is one of those which are engraven in the memory. His almost diminutive stature is, nevertheless, not ridiculous; his eyes sparkle with intelligence, his external appearance is that of a person always excited, always agitated, always on the watch for some means of having himself spoken about. His voice, at once sweet and sonorous, is admirably made to sustain parliamentary conflicts; irony is the most characteristic quality of his speech, and his stinging sarcasms know how to pierce the hardest cuirasses with a cruel but sure aim. He is one of the best orators of the Parliament, his captivating eloquence is of the kind which moves and agitates the masses without they themselves knowing why; if it is examined in detail, one soon discovers that Herr von Windthorst has only the art of oratory and not that science of things, that close logic, which fortifies Herr von Bismarck's arguments. A speech of the Catholic leader, however, creates a sensation, but no conviction. The orator's thought never passes beyond the circle of his hearers; he appeals to their passions, awakens their evil instincts, excites those to hate who listen to him all the more readily since he does not seek to persuade them. The "Pearl of Meppen," as Herr von Windthorst has been termed, has an immense influence on the imagination of those who see in him a champion of oppressed liberty; these enthusiasts do not suspect that under these fine phrases is concealed one of the most authoritative characters in the world. This little man, with his benevolent countenance, his exquisite politeness, his spirit of pleasant raillery, is, in fact, one of those domineering persons who cannot resign themselves to the loss of power.

Formerly Prime Minister to the King of Hanover, Herr von Windthorst was obliged by the very force of circumstances to take sides with the opposition and to combat the Prussian government without truce or intermission. As a Catholic he could give emphasis to this struggle and rally around him many persons who would not have sought protection and support from the chief of the Guelph party. This intelligence soon obtained for him an uncontested authority over all the *Ultramontanes*, for the most part very mediocre people; his marvelous tact enabled

him to conceal his plans from them and to not let them suspect his frenzied ambition.

Herr von Windthorst would long ago have tired of his unthankful role had he not been dominated by the secret desire to again become minister. He dreams of his own triumph, while saying that he is working for that of his friends. He has already made several advances to the chancellor, who, needing him and his party, received them very graciously. Herr von Bismarck, who perfectly understands his intelligent adversary's desires, often enough profits by them, and always makes him render some great service in exchange for a small favor. These two combatants sometimes guess each other's plans, but the prince generally has the advantage in the daily fights which they wage, for he never loses his coolness; besides, he is not, like Herr von Windthorst, embarrassed by his friends, who frequently hinder the movements of the former adviser of King George.

It is difficult to lead a party, especially if that party is actuated neither by love of country, nor liberty, nor even by ambition.

The activity of the Catholic party has for its motive only the triumph of a principle which, besides, it ill comprehends, but to which it clings like a drowning person to a straw. It is evident that the Catholic Church will never obtain in Prussia the supremacy it covets; it therefore agitates only to invent a *modus vivendi* which will permit it to live in peace with the Protestant state. But this end will never be attained except by a direct compact between the court of Rome and the Berlin cabinet. This compact, if the chancellor manages to conclude it, will strike the Center a mortal blow, depriving it of the reason for its existence and of all pretext for fighting. An understanding with the Vatican would be a complete triumph for Herr von Bismarck, for it would disembarrass the government of its most ardent enemies; but he would create so great a number of others that it is better for him to keep those he has.

Herr von Bismarck understands perfectly the difficulty of this situation. As long as things are in their present *statu quo*, it is always easy for him to obtain a majority, either by enticing the *Ultramontanes* by the promise of a concession or satisfying the Liberals by the rigorous execution and enforcement of some clause of the May laws. An arrangement once concluded with the Vatican, he would lose these two convenient means of getting his bills passed, and, besides, he would find himself surrounded with enemies, some of whom would accuse him of having abandoned them, while others would be angry with him for having taken away their pretext for war.

In fact the Center would be very unfortunate if it could no longer attack the government.

It is a party organized solely to fight, it is incapable of following any other policy but that of combat. If it were partly victorious it would at once break up, scattering in such way as to make it impossible to reorganize it at a given moment. The narrow spirit which has since the beginning marked the *Ultramontanes* renders them inapt in everything except bigotry. They do not know what politics are as far as the abstract

principle is concerned, they have a still more vague idea of its application; all their force, all their efforts consist in a violent opposition to all progress whether in the domains of literature, science or arts, or even to that which every nation makes in becoming civilized and freeing itself from the prejudices which surround it. One cannot love two things at the same time, and when one allows himself to be absorbed by the church one ends always by becoming indifferent to one's country. The Germans are right in hating the Catholic party, and I am not surprised to see the anti-clerical organs of France often applaud the clericals in the German Parliament, for such is the blindness of the Catholics that they would not hesitate to call on the foreigner for aid if they believed thereby to render a service to their cause.

Herr von Windthorst, with his far-seeing mind, perfectly comprehends this fanaticism, but makes use of it for his private purposes, and alone, perhaps, among his faithful ones, does not share the convictions he defends. He strives unceasingly to strengthen these convictions in his friends, in order to always have at his disposal an army by aid of which he may be able to gently lead Herr von Bismarck to surrender. He does not perceive that by this constant play of giving with the one hand what one takes away with the other one ends by being discredited in the eyes of the public, which notices all these maneuvers and which, after all, represents opinion.

The chancellor very well understands the advantage he draws from little parliamentary scenes, and if they are wanting for too long a time he provokes them. He has always systematically set his adversaries fighting among themselves, and, thanks to these tricks, he has obtained his best triumphs. His alliance, or even his friendship, always injures those who accept it; hence his final and sure means of getting rid of his enemies is to make them believe that he is touched by remorse for his past conduct toward them. The thing is easily observable, the prince taking a sort of pride never to vary his methods. The Catholic party could neither foresee nor avoid this state of relations with the emperor; hence one may say that its last agony begins. The *Ultramontanes* are enjoying their last successes; Herr von Windthorst already sees the portfolio he covets in his grasp; but the future will gradually destroy these illusions, blight these hopes, and prove to all these disappointed aspirants that when one is opposed by an enemy like Herr von Bismarck, one must, at no price, enter into any compact with him, but combat him always, continually, unceasingly, without truce or mercy, to the bitter end, until one has triumphed over him or has been overcome after losing everything save honor.

ELEVENTH LETTER.

HERR BEBEL AND THE SOCIALISTS.

THE Socialists cannot be accused of making terms with the enemy. Never has a political party so well defended a desperate

cause, never has a handful of men given proof of more indomitable courage or more manly energy. The German Socialists are the brothers neither of the Russian Nihilists nor the French Communists; they have, indeed, some affinity, some resemblance with them; they, it is true, employ the same means, but their aim is a different one, and their ideal, if I may so express myself, reposes on an entirely different basis. They are not revolutionists, but men filled with indignation. They do not contend against the superiority of one social caste over the other; they protest solely against the accumulation of power in despotic hands and of money in mercenary grasps; they have inscribed themselves against that absolute contempt of the fate of the poorer classes with which Herr von Bismarck governs. The most ferocious among them, those who publicly announce their doctrines of murder and arson, have reached this stage of exaltation only through stress of sufferings. Germany, as I have told you several times, is indifferent to all questions of government, provided it has its cabbage soup, and can eat it in peace. What does it care what form of government oppresses it? There are, therefore, only a small number of individuals who allow themselves to be moved by the misery of the people or the hard lot of the workingman. It is this small number which forms the socialistic party, and which has never been able to gather numerous adherents on account of the silent passiveness of those whose poverty it takes to heart, and whose interests it defends with so much warmth.

The Socialists will never become popular; they have everything to attract the masses, but the soil on which they labor is still too new to submit to the influence of their tilling. The entire nation is too much stupefied by its dire military slavery to even admit the thought that it could be liberated from it. That is why only vagabonds or tramps join the Socialists, whose chiefs alone are convinced by and enthusiastic for their cause.

The Socialists have a very painful position in the Parliament. Every one shuns them, all parties equally suspect them. Their line of action remains none the less admirable for its logic and the persistence with which they pursue their end; although few in number, they bargain away their strength to no one where there is a question of making a demonstration in favor of that liberty to which they have consecrated themselves. They have always known how to preserve an independence, so much the more remarkable as it is a thing almost unknown in German parliamentary circles; they have never shown any favors to any one, and have scorned those offered to them. They have never compromised their dignity and have, at times, known how to move their most obstinate adversaries by the rude but sublime eloquence with which they have championed liberty for all, and the rights of citizenship for the poor as well as for the rich. Their theories are evidently impracticable, their plans beyond realization, their aspirations insensate, their view even of human nature too elevated; for a state of society such as they dream of cannot exist with the vices, greed, meanness and ambitions which are the attributes of poor mortals; but I again re-

peat it, their ideal is divine and approaches that preached by Christ on the mount.

All the tenderness and mysticism in the German nature is condensed in them; they have reached the stage where they imagine that peace, harmony, happiness are possible in our sad world, and that man has the right to make use of everything, even of sword and fire, to assure and retain the victory.

This conviction is evidently an error; but it inspires in those who believe in it an ardor like that which animated the soldiers of Mahomet II. when the old Greek empire fell into their hands and Mohammedanism was installed as master in Constantinople. Socialism, too, is a sort of Koran, but a Koran revised and adapted to the needs and aspirations of our epoch. It is a kind of religion—it is, in fact, the only one of which science has not sapped the foundation in the nineteenth century; it has its enthusiasts, its fanatics, its preachers, and even its martyrs, especially in Germany, where it does not have its springs in evil instincts; it is the product of the indigenous poetry of a people whose ideal is personified by Goethe's Marguerite. Socialism, as it is understood and professed in the native land of the immortal poet, would form a most serious danger if encountered in any other country, personified in the same manner; but in a nation incapable of enthusiasm, too calm to be dominated by momentary impressions, not inclined to become excited over theories, to be softened by words or moved by sobs, it will remain, for a long while yet, a chimera, dangerous only for the few exalted souls which will always succumb to the tranquillity and indifference of the nation at large. The latter now combats it with all its might, because it does not understand it, and imagines that the wild harangues of Herr Hesselmann are the same thing as the exalted but logical ideas of Herr Bebel, his friend in appearance but in reality his adversary.

Herr Bebel is a remarkable figure. The son of a workingman, a workingman himself, he reached the position he at present occupies only by force of perseverance, energy and will. He educated himself, and, by the sole strength of his talent, has managed to organize his party, give it a direction and, in fine, discipline it. He is a man of conviction even more than an enthusiast. He is not ferocious, and admits destruction only as a means without erecting it into a principle. He has no hatred against the mighty on earth, but he wants power to be accessible to all and not concentrated in the hands of a few. He desires this power to be the reward of talent, now the crown of a glory purchased by the blood of thousands of victims. He admits no other superiority but that of mind, intelligence and labor; he especially dreams of the amelioration of the condition of the working classes and, before anything, demands universal liberty—religious, social and material liberty. In a word he is an apostle; but not a fanatic. A remarkable orator, his speech persuades, not, like that of Herr von Windthorst, by the fictitious eloquence of well-arranged words, but by rugged conviction, by the plain truth with which he paints the miseries of oppressed humanity, and by his eagerness to communicate his thoughts to his listen-

ers, to make them the sharers of his opinions, and to lead them to recognize the truth of his assertions. He speaks of poverty, misery and vice like a man who has seen these things at close range and has suffered by them. He moves his listeners, not by imaginary sufferings but by real griefs; he draws forth tears, not for insignificant things, but for the severity of the lot of the people, the workingman, of him who struggles, works, strives with want and penury, and who one day will revolt against all the vileness, the filth and corruption which surrounds him, against the luxury, the product of his toils against the gold heaped up in the safes of the Jewish banker's, friends of Herr von Bismarck, with the aid of which great lords snatch his children from him to ruin and betray them.

That is what Herr Bebel talks about; that is what he denounces in the presence of all the poor as well as the rich, the powerful as well as the weak; and that is what he will never be pardoned for; that is why he is hunted like a wild beast, why bitter war has been declared against him, why people seek to confound him with those who, as skeptical but less pitying than he, wish to destroy a form of society they despair of converting.

To this class belongs Herr Hasselmann, who has formerly made himself much spoken about and who represents the perfect type of a callous ranter. His speeches, from beginning to end, are panegyrics of murder and assassination. When the bill directed against the Socialists was presented to the Parliament for the second time, the violence of his words contributed not a little to have it passed into a law. Besides, his friends themselves are aware of the harm his language and opinions inflict on their cause, and they were not sorry when circumstances forced him to retire from the parliamentary arena. For many people, Herr Hasselmann entirely represents socialism, and few imagine that in Germany the greater portion of his adherents are honest enthusiasts, like Herr Bebel, with attractive speech, with ideas distorted with a too great love of justice and equality, with aspirations impossible in a positivistic age like ours, and with projects which cannot be realized in an epoch in which a whole cemetery hanging in the air would not suffice to convert the world to Mahomet's paradise.

TWELFTH LETTER.

COUNT MOLTKE—MARSHAL MANTEUFFEL—GENERAL VON KAMEKE.

COUNT MOLTKE is a tall old man, lean and dry, quite taciturn, still robust for his eighty years, frigid in appearance, with polite manners and on the whole rather insignificant looking. In society he loves to retire within himself, being very modest by nature and appearing to suffer from the homage and respect with which he is surrounded. He rarely hazards an opinion in public, and it requires a grave circumstance or else an extraordinary event to force him out of his retirement. He disdains the world as well as the judgment of the crowd; firmly convinced that the destiny of the people *depends* on those who *govern* them; it is his opinion that the *rulers* alone are entitled to

hold the *reins of office*, without ever informing their *subalterns* of their plans. He is not a politician but a soldier, who wishes to enjoy his works as a soldier and profit to the utmost limits by his victories. He is not ambitious but niggardly in regard to the blood of his soldiers, and on that account desirous of despoiling the enemy, so as to render that enemy incapable of doing harm, by reason of its poverty. He has no pity for those whom fate has pitted against him. He pursues them with his vengeance so as to rob them of the means of a future revolt and revenge. He does not like to be engaged in a struggle with an adversary whom he deems redoubtable and believes to be dangerous. It was for this reason that he rejoiced at the death of General Skobelev, and allowed himself to make public his satisfaction on the occasion of that of Gambetta.

He sincerely abhors war, although he owes his present position to it; but when once engaged in it, he continues it to the end, and contrives to reap all the advantages possible in annihilating his adversaries. Generally he is a man impenetrable to all emotion, even his benevolence is mechanical. Moltke's nature is essentially that of a mathematician. Every sentiment is in his eyes a weakness of no value. He loves nobody. He is so afraid of being accused of allowing himself to be influenced by something or other, that he is often unjust. Although he possesses great influence, he has no favorites nor proteges. In a word, he is a hermit who lives clothed in his egotism, and who hates to be disturbed; a cold, impassive man, incapable of doing a good act for any one, having throughout his whole long life neither obliged any one nor asked a favor of any one. He is the greatest tactician of the age. This is a fact which even his most bitter enemies do not deny, but he is not one of those geniuses who develop by themselves and without the aid of circumstances. He was discovered, which was a very good thing for Germany, for he would never have been able to reveal his talents himself. One cannot say that he does not know how to take advantage of the opportunities offered him; but he is a complete nullity in the ordinary affairs of life. People have been mistaken in their judgment of him many times. At the time he solicited permission to leave the Danish service for the purpose of entering the Prussian army, the secretary of war in his report to the king on the subject said: "The departure of Captain Moltke will not be a great loss to the Danish army."

If the man who wrote this is still living, he must wonder greatly at the perspicacity he formerly displayed. People attribute great political influence to the old marshal. Nothing is more untrue. Count Moltke has never taken any part in governmental affairs, nor has he ever been consulted on the subject. During the war of 1870, his military views alone have been followed, and if Prince Bismarck has sometimes shoved him to the front it has only been in the form of a lightning-rod, to turn away from his own head the thunderbolts of his victims or enemies. The only position in which he has enjoyed unlimited power has been that of chief of the general staff, and on many occasions he has triumphed over the chancellor, who has never been able to

exercise his tyranny in army matters. During the last two years Moltke has become more retired than ever. Since he has Count Waldersee for an assistant, he takes very little interest in the affairs of his department, which besides are becoming too burdensome for his age. Several times, indeed, he has asked to be pensioned, but has never been able to obtain the permission. He therefore continues at his post and even speaks at times in Parliament in support of the government measures. Truth compels me to add that these occasions are very rare indeed, and only take place whenever a cause is desperate.

If Count Moltke is a man of the sword, Marshal Manteuffel is a man of the pen. More of a diplomat than a soldier, he understands the diplomacy better than the art of war. His is an honest nature whose words can be believed. He is devoted to his king and to his country, but will never show it in a way his enemies would call disloyal. His nature while conciliatory is also energetic.

He will never dally with his duty, but will always try to fulfill it in as little disagreeable a way for others as possible. He is not a vindictive man. He is incapable of revenging a wrong or a calumny of which he is the victim. His reputation is stainless, the inflexibility of his principles are as well grounded as those of any one, the chancellor himself not being able to weaken them. His position in Alsace-Lorraine is a most difficult one, and it was only after due deliberation that he consented to accept it, stipulating that he was to be allowed to govern these provinces after his own ideas, and not according to instructions from Berlin. These conditions are not to the taste of Prince Bismarck, who loves to dominate everywhere, even in those places where he has nothing to do. He has, however, been obliged to submit to necessity, since Herr von Manteuffel is a great favorite of the emperor. The marshal at the outset of his term made great efforts to conciliate his constituents. He has often given proof of all the tact a German is capable of, and has on several occasions forestalled the vigorous measures of the government and refused to apply them. He has always been a popular man, and seeks to obtain a measure of popularity in Alsace-Lorraine. His relations with Bismarck are strained, the chancellor having a spite against the marshal on account of his independent spirit, and the latter has a secret contempt for the prince on account of his duplicity. He knows how to do his duty better than his rival. Herr von Manteuffel would not be averse to leaving Strasbourg, where he is not comfortable, like all honest men who are forced by circumstances to do things repugnant to their nature.

General Kameke, formerly secretary of war, is an individual whom you will have occasion to meet, and it is therefore necessary for me to say a few words about him. He is a little, lively man, friendly and amiable, although commonplace, whose influence has never amounted to much, whose best intentions have been destroyed and reduced to insignificance by the hate of the chancellor. Between these two persons an intense warfare has waged since the last ten years, in which Herr von Kameke has

naturally been vanquished. The emperor esteems and protects him, notwithstanding, but the general understands that his position is untenable, and that his reputation would be compromised by remaining at a post from which more powerful persons than himself are trying to oust him. He, therefore, resigned opportunely for himself, and is now endeavoring to forget the snubs he was forced to endure. He is a brave man and a good soldier, of mediocre ability, well-balanced mind, incapable of any intrigue, too conscientious ever to make a success in the world, and who, during the duration of his term as secretary of war, has tried to do the most good he could, without ever having received any thanks therefor.

THIRTEENTH LETTER.

THE PRINCELY FAMILIES.

THESE are the only ones who still enjoy a few privileges. At court they are the objects of special considerations which excite feelings of envy and are the cause of great rivalries. In a country like Prussia, where the military rule, it is natural that the domination of one caste over another is not looked upon with favor, especially when this class possess a title refused to old generals who have shed their blood for their country. Nevertheless in spite of this constant opposition the princely families have succeeded in maintaining their rights. German pride has not decreased, and the hereditary nobility still take precedence of others at court, although they have been obliged to submit to certain curtailments of their former privileges. As, for example, the high rank accorded by the emperor to the Knights of the Order of the Black Eagle. The rank which gave these knights precedence over the princes was the cause of a lamentable scandal in the high society of Berlin. Protests and objections were raised. Several princesses refused invitations to the court ball, the tumult rising to such proportion that the emperors, for the sake of peace and to satisfy the ladies of the court, was obliged to declare that the wives of the Knights of the Black Eagle did not participate in the honors accorded to their husbands. This compromise, which pleased no one, appeased at least the first storm of indignation, and since that time a kind of armed neutrality reigns between the two camps, worse perhaps than actual warfare. These trivialities will perhaps cause you to smile, but at Berlin they are of vast importance. Social life there revolves entirely around questions of etiquette and precedence. To dispute about a rank is an occupation, too, and does not require great ability.

The number of princely families established at the capital is very restricted. The greatest number of the large houses remain there a few weeks during the session of the House of Lords, and as soon as the session is over take their departure.

Very few of these families spend a winter there, and even a less number own a house or occupy apartments. And as for

those who spend any more for social purposes they can be counted on one's fingers.

In the front rank the Ratibors must be placed. The Duke of Ratibor, President of the House of Lords, is one of the largest proprietors in Silesia, where he enjoys great popularity. He even, at the time of the Vatican troubles, played an important political part, on account of the famous petition presented to the emperor by the few southern Catholics who supported the May laws.

The Duke of Ratibor, it is said, has also been slightly burnt by the Strousberg failure; but a man so influential as he is can always draw himself out of an affair like that, especially when his vote is useful to the government. It is in virtue of this axiom that the duke was able to keep above water, where another person would have been drowned.

Personally he is an amiable man, an accomplished *grand seigneur*, not gifted with too much intelligence, but knowing how to get out of an unpleasant situation, no matter of what kind. He possesses faculties which appear to be contradictory and emanate simultaneously from tact and brutality. There are a good many defects in his character, especially with regard to principles and convictions, but he knows the art of hiding these shortcomings. He owns a fine house at Berlin and admirably does the honors, and where he gives from time to time a ball, which is always honored by the presence of the royal family, who treat him with particular consideration.

The duchess, by birth a princess of Furstenberg, is so meritorious a woman that it is difficult to describe her. She possesses everything, goodness, charity and benevolence. She bears with admirable resignation the thorns of her life, which are said to be very sharp. Her entire existence is spent in doing good to others, and if there is any one in this world worthy of the respect and veneration of all, it is assuredly the Duchess of Ratibor.

Her sister, married to the Duke of Ujest, possesses similar virtues. As for the latter, his portrait is soon sketched. He is neither ambitious nor egotistical. He is simply a man who has always tried to satisfy his fancies even if they cost him something besides money. Lately he has been rarely seen at Berlin, where he never stays more than two or three days at a time. Prince Bismarck flatters, cajoles, and has him in his power. The emperor is friendly to him as to the rest of the world. Society receives him without welcoming him. The *demi-monde* regards him as one of its most generous benefactors.

Count Otto von Stolberg-Wernigerode, the head of the at one time sovereign county family of that name, is the most intelligent of all the hereditary noblemen who adorn the court of Berlin. He has occupied several important posts with great credit, and even exercised for a few months the functions of vice-chancellor. He is a modest though active man, not without ambition, sincerely loving his country, but who, just on account of these qualities, has not been able to get along with Bismarck, and has, therefore, been obliged to retire from political life. He is neither able to battle against difficulties nor

vanquish them. He is easily discouraged, and has not met with enough real trouble in life to fully develop his energies. When he saw his efforts fail, he didn't have the courage to fight for them, and preferred to abandon the ground.

He lives nearly the whole year at his castle in Wernigerode, near the Hartz Mountains, and leads a charming life there, surrounded by all the luxuries and comforts a princely fortune can command. Berlin no longer sees him so often, and his house, which at one time was presided over with such grace and amiability by the countess, remains closed. Count Otto von Stolberg-Wernigerode will no doubt still play an important part in the future, when the chancellor will no longer be alive to annihilate him, and perhaps one will see in Prussia, thanks to him, a prime minister conscientious in everything, even in politics.

I have already spoken to you in one of my previous letters of Prince Hatzfeldt-Trachenberg. This is a man who would sell his soul to the devil if he could receive a secretaryship in return.

He comes and goes, now here, now there, striving to attain the summit of his ambition, and it is certain that, should he ever succeed in doing so, he will have a stroke of paralysis through excess of joy. Outside of this, he is quite a decent man, not otherwise offensive. His wife is a very handsome woman, but at the same time one of the proudest women who have ever lived.

An enormously rich prince is Prince Pless, a charming man, of upright character, mediocre intelligence, amiable nature, personally a nullity, but so materially surrounded by his worldly possessions that his personality is effaced by them. He owns the finest house in the city, and had the good sense to have it built by a French architect and French workmen. Here he gives balls which are famous for their elegance. His wife combines with great kindness and intelligence a stiffness which has robbed her of a good many friends amongst those who have mistaken timidity for pride. She is a real lady of the highest class, and it would be a good thing for Berlin if its society counted a larger number of such unions as that of Prince and Princess Pless.

The Radziwill princes have also in their time played a great role in Berlin. Just now their influence has diminished materially, on account of the enmity of the chancellor against them. The actual head of the family, Prince Anton, is a nice gentleman, who during his whole life has had the luck to please everybody, and who is certainly worthy of the reputation he enjoys. A great favorite of the emperor, he has never abused the affection of his sovereign, and has always held himself aloof from any intrigue. In society he is appreciated and more respected than his wife.

The latter is a Frenchwoman, a grandniece of Talleyrand, whom she recalls by a surprising gift of wit as well as by her constant adoration of every rising sun, and by the disdain and contempt she has for all those who are not favored by fortune. She is a favorite of the empress whom she knows how to amuse by her witty and animated conversations, but whom she does not provoke against others, which would be often very easy for

her to do. By reason of her sentiments, her preferences and her pride, the Princess Anton Radziwill is more of a German than a Frenchwoman.

Her great fault is the constant care she has to assert her rank and position in the world. She is so absorbed in the thought of the respect due to her, that she entirely forgets the respect she owes to others. She is, in short, a cold woman, who loves authority above all, who is so convinced of her own perfection as to be blind to the vulgar flattery which surrounds her. She is sometimes wickedly disposed against those of her neighbors whom she accuses of imperfections. She often attacks her own family, and her sister-in-law has been more than once the object of her criticisms. This sister-in-law is a Russian, still very young. She is pretty and elegant, but, like a good many of her countrywomen, affected, proud, jealous of the homage addressed to her, and treating men as if they were only made to serve as sport or amusement to her. She likes no one, and no one likes her. It is said, though, that her conversation is interesting, and that she is quite intelligent. But very few persons are able to judge of the latter point, for she is very reserved, and a great many think a blockhead.

As to Prince Ferdinand Radziwill, cousin of Prince Anton, he is of no consequence in society. He is a deputy, and is seated with the Poles, whose ideas he partakes, in the Chamber. His wife is adorable, loved by all who know her on account of her goodness. Sometimes she shows her pride, but these rare occasions are forgiven.

The Princess of Biron-Courland, the only representative of the family of that name, is still too young for anything to be said of her. Her mother, who since many years occupies a considerable place in society, is a woman of great wit, an accomplished lady, whose only fault is a too great partiality for scandals, which she eagerly listens to. Outside of this little defect she is a benevolent lady, always ready to atone for the mischief her tongue has caused. She is held in high esteem in society and at court, and it is probable she will receive the position of chief lady of the palace, which she is after and which she will admirably fill.

One of the most eccentric types is that of a certain old prince whose name I have already forgotten, but whom you will readily recognize. He can be described in a few words. He has a neck like a bull, the physiognomy of a butcher, and tastes little in harmony with his physical appearance. He is enormously rich and is one of the empress' favorites, because he always bows very low to her without ever opening his mouth. He is a great hunter, a great drinker and a high liver.

Some years ago he happened to be one of the guests at a dinner given by some old beaus to a famous circus-rider at a fashionable restaurant. The dinner finished so noisily that it reached the ears of the editor of a dirty little Jewish paper, which immediately published the facts the next day. The result of the scandal was that our hero, who was to have received the Order of the Black Eagle a few days later, did not receive it before the

end of a year, and was forced to retire to his country estates and await forgiveness, which was not slow in arriving. Another exile was that of Prince Putbus, due to loss of fortune, and the prince remained away from Berlin for some years.

He was more the victim of other people's unscrupulousness rather than of his own prodigality. He was received back with pleasure, and was accorded, together with his daughters, a hearty welcome. He has also a niece who was formerly celebrated for her beauty, wit and the number of her admirers. Now she is a hermit, living retired from the world. She is living a solitary life, in charming apartments, arranged with exquisite taste, thinking only of her souvenirs. They are said to be sufficiently numerous to give her recreation.

FOURTEENTH LETTER.

HERR VON BLEICHRODER AND THE PRINCES OF FINANCE.

LET us enter the regions of finance. Believe me, it is worth the trouble. You will not regret this insight into a society which, though not the best, still controls the latter. Berlin is not Paris. In the capital of the new German Empire as well as in Russia, they still have prejudices which have long ago disappeared in France. One of these prejudices is a repugnance to shake hands with a Jew before a witness, or to go to his house or receive him in their own. I say advisedly witness, for when alone all these little scruples vanish. There isn't a city in the world where the children of Israel are more despised by society and more used by it. No matter what has been said to the contrary, the German aristocracy is not anti-Semitic. She even is too indulgent toward the sons of Moses. She speculates with them in all stock affairs, and participates in the benefits derived from great public works. But she envelopes all this with mysterious airs, and flatly denies it if necessary. Generally, the Berlin aristocrats try to escape the responsibilities of their conduct by affecting a profound disdain for public opinion with regard to their financial transactions.

The financiers are aware of their desire to be looked upon as *grands seigneurs*, and take a malicious pleasure in robbing them of their fortune and putting them at their mercy. The Jews are all-powerful in Berlin. They aspire to ruin the aristocracy, and their organs continually attack them, which is cruel indeed when one considers that it is the money of the vanquished which supplies them with the sinews of war. You will not meet any Jews in society, or else you will meet very few. To become acquainted with them, you must get yourself introduced to one of the financial barons, whose houses are great centers where diplomats meet. On their side the bankers make few efforts to attract the nobility to them. They patiently wait until they make the first step, knowing very well that gold is an irresistible power. They therefore come to them, either for a subscription or some sale for the benefit of a charity, or to borrow some money.

All these little services are rendered by the financiers with good grace. They only ask in exchange from the borrower, or the

one obliged, an acceptance of an invitation to a ball or dinner at their house, which is difficult to refuse.

The most famous banker in Berlin is Herr von Bleichroder. This man is a formidable power. Before 1866 he was nothing more than an unimportant little Jew. Little by little he has arrived, through energy and perseverance, at the position he occupies to-day, that of the richest man in Berlin. Sincere friend, flatterer and admirer of Prince Bismarck, he was the first one to divine the chancellor's great future. He attached himself to his fortune with great perseverance and an obstinacy to which he undoubtedly owes his present grandeur. Physically, Herr von Bleichroder is a little old man with a pronounced Jewish face.

He has the long, curly hair. His thick gray moustache does not fully hide a badly formed mouth and connects with a gray beard. His physiognomy, at once sad and smiling, expresses a singular mixture of duplicity and kindness. But strangest of all are two extinguished eyes behind a pair of blue spectacles, which now and then appear to be looking at you. Although almost blind, he sometimes discerns the forms of persons in front of him. The greatest flattery which can be offered him is to talk about pictures and colors to him. He is dressed with care, and he can be seen any day walking in the park, leaning on the arm of his secretary. Since he is a widower, and apparent or secret infirmities trouble him, he rarely goes into society. Before the death of his wife he used to frequent several official drawing-rooms and take notice of his efforts to be received where he wasn't wanted. He is one of the most intelligent men of our epoch. His insight in financial and political questions is marvelous. He predicts events before even the circumstances necessary to provoke them are evolved. He knows how to take advantage of even the most insignificant things. He has seen princes and nations come to implore his protection. He knows that a word from him can enrich or ruin thousands of people. He is conscious of possessing a sovereignty greater than that of certain kings. And yet he hasn't sufficient moral dignity to curb one weakness, that of wishing to play a part in the world of society other than that of a millionaire. To be just it must be said that Madame Bleichroder was the one who pushed her husband in this path. Since she is dead, one no longer hears the stories which used to be circulated in Berlin at the expense of the great Jewish banker.

One of these was his endeavor to get the *entree* to other houses by virtue of his position as the English consul.

His perseverance in inviting the members of high society, in spite of their declinations, the infinite complacency he observed toward these persons, which even led him to the point of not inviting his financial friends at the same time, made him the laughing-stock of Berlin. Society was divided into two camps, of which one visited at Herr von Bleichroder's and despised him, while the other one despised him but remained at home. Alas! how many of these have found out to their cost that it isn't so easy to treat such a personage so lightly. Herr von Bleichroder sometimes consents to swallow an injury, but only

on condition of reserving his revenge, even accompanying his pity with a check for several thousands. If he wished to write a book recounting the number of society stars who have sought his aid, or whom he has saved from committing a false step and rescued from the brink of destruction, it would be far more instructive than my counsels. He is generous by nature, although generous after his fashion. He knows how to oblige his equals, but he finds a diabolical pleasure in making his power felt to a *grand seigneur* or a noble lady forced to accept his charity. He finds great pleasure in humiliating them with his gross and odious familiarity. He claps the young man who comes to confess a gaming debt to him on the shoulder, kisses the hands of the woman who is forced to confide her embarrassments to him and asks his aid to pay her dressmaker.

Herr von Bleichroder knows how to ingratiate himself in the confidence of the most reserved natures, and passes as the rescuer of those he contributes to ruin.

He gives audiences after the manner of ministers. The chancellor uses him to communicate to the foreign press certain communications which he wishes to appear as if inspired by him. The journalists have a high regard for Herr von Bleichroder, perhaps because they have been deceived by him. The diplomats desire to dine at his house and court him. Every one fears him, some pretend to despise him. All who are in need of money see him in their dreams. A great many obey him despite their inward revulsion. Very few are sufficiently good or disinterested to judge him as he merits, and regard him as an example of the wonderful things which can be accomplished, the obstacles which can be overcome, by the Jewish race.

Herr von Bleichroder has a partner named Schwabacher who is married to a Holland lady, a very charming woman. Thanks to her, he has conquered a portion of society. They are received in a number of houses, mainly those of foreigners, and it must be confessed that the tact, spirit and manners of Madame Schwabacher are nowhere out of place. She gives very nice balls and exquisite dinners, and one at least never comes in contact in her house with any of that low society which is found at houses of the queens of her world. What strikes one in these ladies is their extreme beauty and polished manners, which, though not the true ones, are nevertheless agreeable. Their husbands, on the other hand, represent the Hebrew race in all its purity: the crooked nose, big eyes, coarse voice and a premature stoutness. Nothing is missing, not even the peculiar fingers destined to rake in the money. They have no art in their conversation, their faculties being occupied with the millions they see in the distance. They are nevertheless curious types to study, and I advise you not to neglect to do so. However, do not throw yourself too soon into this world, and above all do not abuse your acquaintance. These are persons with whom you may dine occasionally, but must always keep at a distance.

You can pay court to the wives, but you must not forget that their manners are not those of high society, and that their principles, with few exceptions, are firmly established. Besides

which their wit is more keen and developed than that of women of high society, and their criticisms of the latter are always amusing to hear. You who have so caustic a nature will be able to appreciate them better than any one else.

I hope you will not become the friend of the Berlin Jew. The supremacy the race has gained in Germany is not precisely useful to the country. While admitting that this power of the German Jews is of no great harm to us, I warn you that the accumulation of such wealth in the hands of one race bodes no good to other ones.

FIFTEENTH LETTER.

THE COUNTESS OF SCHLEINITZ AND WAGNERISM.

THE Countess of Schleinitz is the best educated woman in Berlin. Her ability is from every point of view wonderful. She interests herself in everything relating to science and the arts. She is a splendid musician, understands painting, adores literature, and occupies herself with politics, having a horror of social problems. She has neither prejudices nor jealousies of any kind. Besides this, an accomplished woman of the world, no blue-stocking, knowing how to conceal her knowledge, benevolent by nature and too much occupied to have any time to hate or distrust. She goes very little in society and contents herself with receiving a select circle of acquaintances and friends, composed principally of artists and literary men. She is the only one, in Berlin who opens her doors to the latter, the balance of society disdaining to admit in its drawing-rooms "that crowd."

Formerly Madame de Schleinitz received every evening, but the chancellor, who interferes in everything, even in the most insignificant things, rebelled against the *quasi* opposition of the countess. He gave her to understand that it would be better if she would discontinue her receptions. As a result of this singular interference, the only intelligent center in Berlin was suppressed. At present Madame de Schleinitz continues to receive, but only at rare intervals and then only intimate friends. She has curbed the impetuosity of her character, which often induced her to confide in the first comer. She still receives political men, but more especially artists and writers, which society reproaches her with. Happily the countess is too warm-hearted to take the least notice of what is said. She seeks her pleasure wherever she can find it, her intelligence not being able to content itself with the follies and stupidities of fashionable life. She feels an irresistible desire to associate with people able to understand her and whose ability equals hers. Her house is a real republic. One can meet there painters, musicians, actors, journalists, political men, great lords and fashionable women. Free discussions are permitted there, opinions can be freely expressed, and one is always encouraged by the gracious smile and exquisite tact of the hostess.

The husband rarely appears at these reunions, and allows the countess full liberty. Count Schleinitz, a former minister of

foreign affairs and now a member of the emperor's household, is a man of intelligence, already broken by age and disease. It can be said of him, that whether silent or when speaking he is never commonplace.

Everything in him is solid gold. What distinguishes the count and countess most is their goodness and sincere cordiality toward those with whom they have relations. They are both kind-hearted people, which, perhaps, explains why they have so many enemies. However, as it is impossible for any one to be perfect in this world, the charming countess has always a weak spot, or rather a false note, in the harmony of her person. This defect consists in a passion, a fanatic regard for Wagner and his music. It was she who made the composer fashionable in society. She never speaks of him except with religious respect, and when he lived and visited her house, she used to contemplate him in an ecstasy similar to that which shook Mary of Bethany when she lay at the feet of Jesus. To tell the truth, Madame de Schleinitz considers him as little inferior to the Saviour. He is for her a god, and her enthusiasm attains such a ridiculous height that one would call it madness, if one did not consider that she had to have some connecting link with her country. When one is not German by heart, nor spirit, nor tastes, one must somehow have one point of attachment to one's country, if it is only the passion for noise. The German character is personified in Wagner's music. In the same way that Bismarck represents the practical side, Wagner represents the artistic. From time immemorial the music of a country is inspired by the characteristics of its inhabitants. Italian airs are mainly gay, the Slavonic melodies melancholy, the songs of the Orientals plaintive.

German music is strong, sonorous, inharmonious, energetic, imperious, almost barbarous, just like the nation. It wishes to destroy the others, inspire itself on every one, and more characteristic still, it didn't develop nor give proof of its individuality until the moment in which the nation itself accomplished the same transformation.

Wagner is the Bismarck of music. His work will last as long as that of the chancellor. They both suit the needs and aspirations of their epoch and country. They are both the men of the hour, men essential to a positive people eager for conquest, who disdain everything gentle and dreamy, for whom power and noise alone exist.

And yet the success and influence of the Wagnerians are in a great measure due to fashion, this supreme arbiter, which even in Germany makes the law. At one time this fashion degenerated into a farce. People went to hear Tannhauser and the Nibelungen simply because it was *chic* to do so and because high officials had given the example. They applauded for the same reasons, without knowing whether it was worth the trouble. They imitated the inspired airs of the really faithful disciples so as not to appear skeptical in their eyes, in the same way as one mechanically makes the sign of the cross when the holy water is passed around in church. The momentary triumph of Wagner

has in a great measure been caused by the noise made by his admirers around his personality. One can confidently predict that the Wagnerian fanaticism will not spread to foreign countries, and even among his own countrymen his admirers will dwindle into a few enthusiasts. Even now since the death of the composer, his popularity has sensibly diminished, and the number of people who have undertaken a pilgrimage to Bayreuth this summer was visibly less than last year. Very soon the sanctuary will be deserted or else will no longer be visited except from curiosity, like a Chinese pagoda or a Hindoo temple. Was it not from mere curiosity that so many persons went to hear Parsifal? Very few undertook this journey out of admiration for the work of the composer.

To the number of the last, however, we must cite the name of the Countess de Schleinitz. She at least is sincere in her blind admiration. Do not for a moment think that all the Wagnerians in Germany are as exalted and positive as the countess. All varieties are met with, even moderate ones. Nevertheless I advise you always to express your opinion of the music of the master with great caution, for, in presence of a stranger, every German will energetically defend him, as something which belongs to him, which derives its source from the essence of the national character. The German loves Wagner, protects him vigorously and without reserve against all criticism.

By doing this he believes he is loving, protecting and defending the Fatherland. He displays an ardor equal to that he shows in preserving his conquests and his supremacy, which he has acquired by the grace of Bismarck the Wagner of politics.

SIXTEENTH LETTER.

FASHIONABLE SOCIETY IN BERLIN.

It is now time to give you a general picture of Berlin society, to make known to you its manners, customs, its method of treating strangers, to acquaint you with its weakness, its failings, its bad—and I was about to say its good qualities.

Berlin society, my young friend, is not a society like others. It does not possess our intelligent skepticism. It is even wanting, as far as the higher classes are concerned, in the ordinary German honesty. There is something corroded, uncivilized about it, which apparently dates from the early ages of history (I refer to questions of morality). It is entirely unconscious in its actions, its manners are neither vicious nor degenerated, they are the manners simply of our ancestors before the meaning of the word propriety had been invented.

Lax morals flourish in Berlin like a plant in its favorite soil. Love is rarely met with, gallantry is a thing unknown. A Launzun or a Richelieu would be impossible there.

But this society, so little scrupulous, as far as its own morals are concerned, becomes rigidly severe when it is the question of the morals of any other place. It watches the least departure, notes the slightest foibles, and even suspects secret thoughts. Berlin society is united like a Camorra. All who do not form

an integral part of it are bound to approve it and to submit to its commands under penalty of being put under its ban. The most senseless calumnies are spread about them, they are injured in what gives them their highest respect, they are attacked in what is dearest to them.

A war is waged against them, in which force and numbers must one day or another triumph. For singular circumstances, this society, which has no conscientious scruples for itself, knows how to force others to be honorable, and, for the very reason that it is itself lacking, hates those who practice virtue and cultivate moral worth. When it overwhelms them, it does so both through jealousy and to drown, by the noise of its exclamations, the accusing voice of public opinion, which, without this, might perhaps mount even up to it.

Without exaggeration, it may be said that one portion of Berlin society passes its life in spying on the other. That is why it is impossible to keep a secret there. To give you an idea of the gossip and tale-bearing born and flourishing on the banks of the Spree is a thing impossible. Suffice it to know that people there know your income better than your banker, your bill of fare better than your cook, the number of persons you received during the day better than your servants, and your thoughts better than yourself. One lives there, in a word, under a surveillance greater than that of the police.

So much for the morals. As far as intelligence is concerned, no attempt even is made to cultivate it. As a rule, the Berlin woman of the upper classes neither reads, works, nor has any occupation. She passes her time in gossiping, dressing and undressing herself, and in seeking who can best aid her in doing so. She has not two serious thoughts in her head nor two honest impulses in her heart.

Her preferences are vulgar, her influence nothing. She is lacking in grace, education and tact, she is loud and, unhappily for her, is eager to imitate the Frenchwoman in what the latter has that is flashy. It is very difficult, if not impossible, to make a fashionable lady of Berlin talk, so little is she aware of what is occurring, so much is she absorbed by her own person or by the doings and actions of her rivals. She offers no other resource to her admirers than to speak with her about her wishes. This is the type of the elegant lady of fashion who does what she pleases. In addition to her there is the housewife who is too respectable for me to describe, and who, like happy people, has no history. When the fashionable lady ages, as she has not settled down, learned nothing, when she has not even any longer the time to repair the irreparable outrage, she becomes jealous of the success of the young women, she casts reflections, attacks, scorches, scratches and imparts to society a sour element which adds wicked malevolence to laxity of morals.

The gentlemen in high society in Berlin do not appear to me to be any more interesting. Those who are of any worth are, at the same time, very reserved. The old men surpass even the women in gossiping, and the young only know how to eat, dance and gamble. Their ideal is a supper after a ball. The

amount danced and eaten in Berlin is almost fabulous. The officers, in particular, bring to these two occupations a greater ardor, if that is possible, than that which animates them on the drill-field.

A figure of a quadrille is, in their eyes, a sacred thing, and a supper, an affair of state. One never says after an evening's reception: "It was very amusing," or "very tiresome last evening;" but, "Good table"—"bad table."

But, you will ask me, are there not in Berlin some houses where one may agreeably spend an hour or two? Well, no, they don't exist, at least not for foreigners. As a rule, each one lives for himself, no one seeks to share his thoughts with others, or experiences the need of exchanging his impressions, of communicating his views of men and things; no one finds any pleasure, except Madame von Schleinitz, of whom I have just spoken, in assembling witty spirits around her. It is impossible, in Berlin to keep up with what is happening in Europe. It's all well enough for this city to be at present the center of the political world, one hears there the topics of the day discussed less than anywhere else. One vegetates there without taking an interest in anything, and life, altogether, is so arranged there that it is very difficult to learn what is taking place in any other circles of society but that of the court. A sort of a terrorism rules over the thoughts, one does not dare to speak about what one sees, much less point out to others what one fears. Foreigners, though treated with much politeness, are, nevertheless, always considered as intruders, and they are made to feel this in a thousand ways, in society as well as in the clubs, admission to which is often refused them.

Among the diplomats themselves there are only a few who have succeeded in fully pleasing, and they are those who have become entirely Berlinized, that is to say, who love dancing, gossip, champagne and lobster-salad, after midnight.

Berlin society, in spite of its caprices and vices, is nevertheless interesting to observe. One may witness there a singular pride which is not without its force in a victorious people. The Germans despise other nations, accuse them of all the faults they have themselves; laxity of morals is one of their most frequent reproaches, and you may see, according to these few pictures, that this charge may be turned against them. If they have not the sprightliness which we, which the French have, it is perhaps because their intellectual baggage is even more slender.

SEVENTEENTH LETTER.

THE THREE SISTERS.

TWENTY years ago, they were young, pretty and attractive; they had long brown curls, wasps' waists, a transparent complexion; in fine, all the attributes of the Three Graces, and they were so called. To-day, their brown hair has become ashy-colored, their teeth have acquired a new whiteness, their cheeks a borrowed freshness, and their lips a more brilliant carmine. The waist has become stouter, but its suppleness is replaced by its

majesty. The name itself of the Three Graces has changed; it has given place to that of the three sisters.

These three sisters are the most important persons in Berlin society. One of them is a widow, still beautiful, very rich, and very elegant. I will not speak to you about her private conduct; if she has had adventures, they are to-day blended under the general heading of numerous and brilliant successes. Besides, what matters whether one has been calumniated when one has become an Arsinoe?

The beautiful widow is artificial in her appearance and artful in her morals. She no longer thinks of anything but her toilet, her furniture, her respects, her weekly receptions, and rarely of gallantry.

Her youngest sister has not yet turned her back on the vanities of this world, probably because she still has a husband. She is the least endowed with intelligence of the three sisters; but, in revenge, vanity is the most developed in her. Like her sisters, she is a woman of method and calculation, who has no extravagance to reproach herself with, who has committed no folly except for cosmetics, the toilet, in fact all that may be used under the label "Bloom of Youth." She loves to be surrounded by admirers, and she attracts a great number, especially among the very young men, whom she prefers to select from the ranks of officers belonging to the crack regiments. The body-guards have her greatest sympathy. This swarm of young admirers, of pages, enchants her, for it gives her the illusion of a second youth and forms a sort of court around her. She is, besides, the queen of fashion. It is good style to admire the countess—have I already told you that she is a countess? As far as I am concerned, in the last days of my stay in Berlin I had a kind of respect for the care she took to remain beautiful.

My sentiment was something analogous to that we experience in the face of an ancient statue well preserved. Moreover, the countess is amiable. She smiles on pretty women, knows how to hide the envy they inspire in her, and makes a great show of the interest she takes in ugly persons; she, by turns, consoles the wives neglected by their husbands, and the husbands wearied of the conjugal hearth. Her influence is enormous. Never was woman greater in the domain of fashion. She is an absolute sovereign.

The eldest sister of these three ladies has no importance, except that she is one of the three sisters. She has neither the pretensions of her younger sisters, nor their commonplace amiability. She is a woman endowed with an excellent heart, good-natured, noisy, vulgar, a sort of type met with in the novels of Paul de Kock. She takes offense at nothing, never offends anybody, is agreeable to all, takes life from its gayest side, and pets her eldest daughter to excess. She makes no pretenses of youth, has never been beautiful, and keeps open house every evening. People come there to play, smoke, dance, and lounge at pleasure; one even finds there comfortable easy-chairs to pass the night.

Her *salon* is among the most curious to study as to its composition, and if you should ever obtain an introduction, I advise

you to keep your eyes and ears open. In Berlin, Madame * * * 's receptions enjoy a reputation which, I must say, is justified. Besides, it would do so everywhere, for it is impossible to find, in good society, a house in which one may enjoy the advantages of a club and, at the same time, the charms of a private house, rendered agreeable by the presence of young women, or women fancying that they are still young.

In this *salon* all strive to make the men forget that they belong to a circle of society in which women are to be honored and are worthy of it, and in which it is the custom to be polite to them.

The greatest freedom reigns there. As soon as the lamps are lit in the drawing-room it begins to fill. The frequenters arrive in succession, and, after having saluted the mistress of the house and often even before doing so, light their cigarette, sit down at a gaming-table or converse by twos, on a sofa. There is never any general conversation, but a great deal of private. Happy couples promenade through the parlors, voluntarily halting in those which are the most deserted, and occasionally admiring the portrait of a celebrated actress, a portrait which is one of the ornaments of the sumptuous dwelling. Glasses of beer are passed around; the young officers take off their tunics or dolmans; some even go so far as to tap the daughter of the house on the shoulder; everybody calls her by her pet name.

Look, on that lounge is seated a dark-featured woman, still beautiful, with stiff yet supple waist, with wide open nostrils like those of a race-horse, and with a complexion formed with an exquisite art, in harmony with the shade of her dress. This woman has a steely glance; her words are short but full of determination; at the first sight one divines in her an icy soul, the calculating instincts of women of marble.

At her side a man, with blonde whiskers, whose too large nose does not destroy his handsome countenance, is leaning against a table. Since three years he comes there, since three years he gazes at her. The attitude is always the same, the gaze only has changed. At first the expression was submissive, later on it was admiring, now it is growing tired. She obstinately persists in guarding this last conquest, in enchaining this liberty which wishes to be free again. How long will the struggle last, and who will gain the victory?

The husband is playing cards at a distance and seems to be indifferent to this drama. He has a stupid and silly look. His function consists in surrounding his wife with luxury. He has not one ambition, and enjoys life like a real Georges Daudin. Sometimes an enigmatical smile passes over his lips. Would he take a melancholy pleasure to see each morning the wrinkles deepen on his wife's brow?

Further away, reclining in an easy chair, a cup of tea at his side, is an already elderly man, a diplomat; it is a minister with an intelligent countenance but shifting glance. He is absorbed in a most animated conversation with a woman, whose black dress is ornamented with orange-tinted ribbons—but I perceive that it is the beautiful countess of whom I have already spoken

to you, and who this time has deserted the army for the diplomatic ranks.

There in that obscure corner a young, light-complexioned girl, almost a child, with candid gaze and sympathetic features, is listening to a tall young man in the uniform of a body-guard.

They are still at the preliminaries, which are termed, in the language of the society that I have just described, "a museum." This word appears strange to you, and you ask me to explain it. I have searched a long while, and have found that in a German sense it means the poetical moment in love, the time when one makes verses and cultivates the *Muse*. A graceful joke, pre-eminently German. The first time that I heard this word I had an idea, I, who am a man of the eighteenth century, and who knows the German scientific manias, that this museum described the betrothal phase, the embryo phase of human sentiments, and the psychologic state of a love destined to be classified and labeled and placed in a bottle in the show-window of marriage. But to return to the *salon* of one of the three sisters * * * I cannot conceal from you that the absolute free and easy style which reigns there has done an injury to Berlin society. It has spoiled it, just as men of good education are spoiled when they consent to no longer observe the proprieties. I have often noticed that good company becomes the worst when it throws off its habitual conduct.

People have become so accustomed to pass their evenings in a society which might be termed *German Bohemian*, that they have lost the taste for good society.

EIGHTEENTH LETTER.

HERR STOECKER AND THE JEWISH QUESTION.

AMONG the problems of her political life which Germany must solve, the least one is assuredly not that formidable Jewish question, which is daily becoming more serious and menacing. The attempt has been made to declare the anti-semitic agitation as factious and artificial. Its importance has been attributed to the efforts of Pastor Stoecker and his adherents, and a prompt and complete fiasco has been predicted. I regret to say that I am forced to differ with this opinion. I believe, on the contrary, that the hate which exists in Germany against the Jews, a tenacious and blind hate, will only go on increasing in proportion as the influence and wealth of the Hebrew families augment.

All men are more or less envious, and the Germans surpass all others on this point. There is, therefore, nothing astonishing in the Germans feeling an antipathy for a race which, little by little, has supplanted them in all the vital questions of the country.

He who has not seen the Jews in Germany, and studied them in Berlin, can form no idea of what they absorb and lay hands on. At an epoch like ours, in which money is the only force which is respected, where the greed for wealth expresses itself in every conceivable way, the Jews in Germany are the only ones who have conquered this power and here know how to pre-

serve it. Germany is not a country like England or France, where every one believes himself obliged to work, where no one is ashamed to set to work to build the edifice of his fortune. In this prejudiced country, where no career except that of arms, is looked upon as honorable, where a nobleman, by the mere fact of his birth, imagines himself to be entitled to live in idleness, the nobility, little by little, has become as poor as it is proud. It suffers, nevertheless, from this material degradation, and since a few years attempts to remedy this state of affairs, by risky transactions or stock speculations, for which they desire a third party, who is generally a Jewish banker or broker.

All Berlin, at the time I was leaving, spoke of a catastrophe which happened last year, to one of the most brilliant officers of the guards, whose wife was one of the stars of the social world, and who was forced to leave the army on account of being engaged in a money matter in which a Jew had drawn him. The story created a big sensation because the parties were well known; but how many similar adventures remained secret. How many have the same commencement and the same ending, and are between the same people, tending only to increase the hate of the German nobility against the Jewish bankers. What is most unpardonable is being made the dupe of those one wishes to fool. In crying "Death to the Jews," the German nobleman hopes to participate in the spoils of the favored sons of Israel and get back the money he has lost. As for the people, their antipathy is explained by the fact that they are continually under the domination of the Israelite, who has bought the factories which give sustenance to the laborer, and accumulated the capital which serves to purchase pleasures for the rich. What I have said of the high classes of society is equally true of the lower classes. The nation by itself is not capable of spontaneous efforts; she only knows how to obey impulses; moral force is wanting to her. She can neither invent, direct, produce, nor take the initiative. She has neither the commercial spirit of the English, the imitative spirit of the Americans, nor the energy of the Frenchmen. She is made to fight, to destroy, and like their ancestors, the Teutons, she is absolutely incapable of replacing what she destroys.

They are an industrious, persevering people, but indolent in regard to invention, organization, and combination of the faculties. The German excels in executing, but he is unable to conceive. He is an admirable instrument, a good tool, but he never does anything great except on a restricted space. He imitates, but does not execute. He is a nullity, and incapable of understanding the industrial and financial questions. The few exceptions to this rule only tend to affirm it.

Men like Borsig and Krupp are phenomenons, who will not be reproduced so soon. Commerce itself, like the banking and manufacturing interests, is in the hands of the Jews. These last are then the absolute masters of the national activity, and one cannot wonder that, in a moment of passion, the noble, the citizen, and the workman unite in cursing the semitic tyranny. Bismarck is the only one who has frankly accepted the aid of the

Jews without any other thought than that of obtaining from this alliance a guarantee of achieving his colossal work in peace.

The Rev. Dr. Stoecker, against whom so much has been written, is only the mouthpiece of the great majority of the general people. The pastor is not an isolated individuality preaching in behalf of his own personal ideas, but a man in whom is incarnated the entire soul of a nation, as were, for instance, the Duke de Guise during the League, Luther during the Reformation, and Danton during the French Revolution. One might not agree with him, and blame his ferocious energy, but any one who has lived in Germany knows why he is the apostle of a party.

The English, who protest so energetically against the crusade undertaken by Stoecker, do not understand the cause which led to it. In their country, thanks to their commercial spirit as well as to their political genius, the Jew has become an Englishman and has identified himself with the interest of his adopted country. It is the same in France, where the Jew works for the prosperity of a nation which has become his own. In Germany the case is different. Here one is confronted with the presence of a powerful material force, which has turned back on those to whom she owes her development.

The Rev. Dr. Stoecker is therefore not a fanatic, but a man who comprehends the danger his country is running. Only he deceives himself if he believes he can avert this danger by the expulsion of the Jewish race. It is not sufficient to get rid of one evil, one must see to it that no greater evil is caused by doing so. In this connection I would like to know what would become of the material greatness of Germany, if Herr Stoecker's ideas were carried out. The former would be very much embarrassed at his victory. An edict of Nantes or a Saint Bartholomew against the Jews in Germany would be a calamity. But it wouldn't be the same if the pastor would combat the Jews by their own arms, by learning their commercial secrets, by fighting them on their own ground and disputing with them for that power of money of which they have unlimited control to-day. If, in the conduct of his affairs, the German Jew is sometimes small and servile, he has known, however, how to preserve in his general race characteristics, a kind of independence against the brutal force of the grenadiers of Frederick, which serves him in good stead.

Seneca says that a nation usually ends by being punished for her faults by the excess of her good qualities. Germany is a striking example of the truth of this axiom. She has up till now triumphed over her enemies, thanks to her faculty for passive obedience, her tranquil perseverance and proud force. She has defeated all her foreign adversaries. But she is unarmed against those she placed in her own home, who live under the protection of her institutions and her laws. She ought to pull down the flag to them, confess her inability to annihilate the power and influence of adversaries of whom she ought to have made partners, if she had had the practical *savior-faire* of the English or the assimilative spirit of the French.

But what I here tell you no German will confess, Pastor

Stoecker least of all. If you find time I would advise you to make the acquaintance of this remarkable man, one of the most distinguished men in Germany. In spite of his prejudices and his mystical piety, so often to be met with in Protestant pastors, he will not fail to interest you by his picturesque language. The arguments he makes, the violent forms of his attacks, the sincere convictions with which he develops false theories, make of him a man incapable of dallying with his conscience, which is rigidly austere. He has submitted to numerous attacks with a stoicism worthy of the ancients, answering hate with scorn. His influence is greater than people outside imagine, perhaps even more so than he or his friends suspect.

When the history of the first twenty years of the German empire shall be written Herr Stoecker will not fail to occupy a place as the organizer of the anti-semitic movement.

NINETEENTH LETTER.

THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS.

THE diplomatic corps plays an important part in Berlin, which is explained by the little development society has there. In this big city, the number of persons who compose what is termed high society is so small that it could not exist without the aid of a foreign element. This alone explains the reception accorded the diplomatic body in Berlin. Balls and parties are expected to be given by them where they can dance and eat. As for the secretaries and attaches, they do the best they can with respect to conforming to German manners. In short, the diplomatic body is treated like persons one has need of, and they are accorded no more than their utility requires. The dean of the diplomatic body is Lord Odo Russell (who has recently been created Lord Ampthill), who represents her Britannic majesty. He is a man of great intelligence and remarkable shrewdness. With exquisite tact, and a certain distinction, he has filled several important posts. He is a diplomatist of the old school, knowing how to hide his thoughts, divine those of others, keep silent when necessary, and speak on the proper occasion. For a long time ambassador in Italy, his intimacy with Cardinal Antonelli has permitted him to acquire a subtlety which is almost Italian, and which is rarely found in an Englishman. Very observing by nature, he has become more so through experience. He has known how to weigh characters, discover their little failings, and make use of their susceptibilities and mean instincts. He never gives his real opinion of things or individuals. He has the prudence of a serpent while pretending to be expansive. He serves his country more than those who govern it, obeys tradition, and is neither the servitor of a minister or a cabinet.

During the Congress of Berlin he apparently sank from view, but under-handedly he rendered the greatest services to England, which might have been compromised by the zeal of Lord Beaconsfield, if there had not been some one to soften the im-

petuosity and transpose into diplomatic French the too expressive phrases of Disraeli.

Lord Ampthill is a great admirer of the chancellor. Is he sincere or not in his enthusiasm? This is difficult to say. For without being a sphinx, this ambassador is impenetrable. With the greatest amiability he turns a conversation aside when he suspects it of becoming dangerous. In the same way he possesses the talent of making you believe that you are his confidant when he has merely spoken a few commonplace sentences. No one is more able to answer or squelch a journalist than he, and in so fine a way that the poor reporter never knows that he has been made a dupe of. In all Lord Odo Russell's words lie a grain of truth, which even when it does not seem to be very true, is still no lie. Of all the diplomats accredited to the Court of Berlin he is the only one, I believe, who has divined Prince Bismarck's thoughts and judges him as that man of iron merits, without injuring the pleasant relations he has with him, in spite of the constant divisions which occur between them on political questions.

The chancellor appreciates the English ambassador and even fears him a little, because he suspects him of divining him. He does not forget that Lord Ampthill, despite his apparent amiability, preserves the English coldness and that he will not allow himself to be seduced by flatteries nor blinded by friendly assurances.

He will resist every attempt at corruption, and with imperturbable calmness reveal what portion of the promises made will be kept and what left undone. While remaining an accomplished man of the world and a courteous diplomat, he knows how to assert himself as a statesman, capable of seeing through all the most Machiavellian schemes of the chancellor. He married a daughter of Lord Clarendon. Lady Ampthill, without having the intelligence of her husband, is nevertheless a woman of wit, who strives to extend her circle of acquaintances and keep herself informed of the movements of society. She is the ideal of an ambassador's wife. She is made to shine and reign over a household. No one would think her the wife of an ordinary citizen. To look at her one would think she was formed for the position she occupies. Very distant, she possesses pride she mistakes for solemnity. She is able to be spiteful and confound any one guilty of attacking her as a fashionable woman and the wife of an ambassador. Her conversation is full of resources but she is more friendly to those who flatter than to those who honor her. She loves to rule and exercise in her drawing-room a kind of royalty. She has perhaps been a little petted in Berlin but she is grateful for it, for there is no one in the diplomatic body who spends so much money for social purposes as the English embassadress. Her parties and dinners are always arranged in an admirable manner, and if she desires to be a sovereign, it cannot be denied that she would fulfill with joy the duties of a sovereign toward her subjects.

The Austrian ambassador and his wife do not cut such a large figure in Berlin. Count Szechenyi, when one sees him for the

first time, appears to be a very agreeable man. When one visits him more frequently, one finds him to be very monotonous, and if one knows him longer still he begins to be very tiresome, since he always repeats himself. He is one of those talents which soon exhaust themselves and with whom one soon perceives that one must furnish almost the whole conversation. Nevertheless he knows how to listen charmingly, and is a precious resource for bores. No one knows whether he is a good or bad diplomat, having never had anything to do than maintain between two governments friendly relations which have already been created. He is a model of courtesy. If he never divines any of the chancellor's plans he in turn never seeks to oppose them. He knows how to live at peace with the whole world, and he will die firmly believing that he has contributed to the great political work of his time. If he was wealthier he would be admirably suited for his position; unhappily the retrenchments he is forced to make sour his temper and he has been known to complain of the cost of his meager parties. His wife makes the mistake of imitating him in this particular, and allowing the public an insight into her domestic embarrassments. She is, notwithstanding, a good and charming woman, very servicable, but not formed for the position in which she finds herself.

Before the incumbency of the present minister, France was represented at Berlin by Count de Saint-Vallier, *persona grata* in certain circles and a *bete noir* in others. He is very difficult to describe. Supple as a reed, slippery as an eel, sly as a fox, he sometimes falls, but always lands on his feet.

He is a real old man of the mountain. Although his convictions are impregnable, they permit him certain compromises with men and things of which he has need. He believes himself to be useful but is only ambitious. He thinks he is working for his country, whereas, he is only working for himself. A man of great intelligence, he sometimes lacks steadiness and has not always the tact to know he forces a note. As a diplomat he is very adroit and often perspicuous, although he has allowed himself on occasions to be deceived. He often falls into a trap when the trap is slyly prepared and tickles his vanity. He loves to be thought important, and with this view, he took care to be immediately on good terms with Bismarck. The chancellor received him with more cordiality than he extended to Monsieur de Gontaut-Biron. Count de Saint-Vallier has with marvellous tact unburdened himself from the faults of his predecessor. He has kept aloof from all the little intrigues into which the favorite Duke Decazes allowed himself to be drawn. Thanks to this conduct, he has been able to secure a protector in the person of the chancellor and made himself a friend of the empress by a real or simulated friendship for her maid-of-honor, the Countess von Hacke. But by continually looking after his own position, he has in a measure forgotten the dignity of his position as an ambassador. I believe his dream was not to remain ambassador in Berlin, but to become minister of foreign affairs in France. With this aim in view he is continually on the fence, often

blaming at Paris what he approved at Berlin, and *vice versa*. This much must be said of him, that he has never been a party man, but it must also be said that he has constantly looked after his own interests.

He is capable of being a devoted friend and an excellent counselor, but in politics he is a disciple of Talleyrand, one of those men who know how to represent the fortunes and misfortunes of a country equally well, and draw a profit from them. The French ambassador was absolutely detested by the former friends of M. de Gontaut, and I know that they were all pleased at the recall of M. de Saint-Vallier.

A minister whom I would advise you to study, for he is worth the trouble, and conciliate, for he is dangerous, is M. Sabouroff, who represents his Majesty Alexander the Third. A man of great intelligence, he, as M. de Saint-Vallier, confounds the interests of his country with his own. He is one of those daring men who never scruple at anything, and know how to get rid of a friend as well as of an enemy. He is one of those who maintain that the end justifies the means. Thanks to his absolute indifference for what he calls embarrassing sentimentality he always keeps himself on the surface of the political ocean.

His dexterity is great and his talents unquestioned. I doubt whether it is his constant preoccupation to utilize them for the benefit of his mission. He is a lucky diplomat rather than a statesman. He has been able to create a good position for himself at Berlin, and Prince Bismarck is grateful to him for paying more attention to the ladies than to Russian diplomacy. Personally, M. de Sabouroff is the most agreeable man in Berlin. He is an exquisite conversationalist, an eminent archaeologist, of perfect taste, a great collector of Grecian antiquities and naturally a great admirer of modern dresses.

Count de Launay, the representative of the king of Italy, and Sadullah Bey, the envoy of the sultan, do not deserve a long description.

The first named would be very agreeable were it not that he is hampered by his wife, whose jealousy freezes him and prohibits him from showing his true nature. Madame de Launay, however, is not a fool, but she is as distrustful as she is witty. Unfortunately she is deaf, which renders a conversation with her impossible. Perhaps Providence wished to spare her a good many victims who would otherwise be lashed by her spiteful tongue. The couple once in a while give a ball, where the heat is unbearable and the refreshments very poor. These are the kind of receptions given by the Count and Countess de Launay. At any rate, these receptions are superior to those of their Turkish colleague, who sacrifices his feelings by drinking other people's wines, and forbids himself to offer any for fear of transgressing the law of the Prophet.

I will not take up much time with the ambassadors and envoys of the little powers or secondary kingdoms. Only Spain and Portugal are worth sketching in detail. Monsieur Merry y Colon de Benomar, the Spanish minister, is a little old man, still hearty in appearance, a great admirer of the ladies, and proud of

descending through them from Christopher Columbus. He displayed his diplomatic talents in Morocco, and allowed people to know that he could do the same thing in Europe. In society he is very amusing and has a pronounced Spanish accent. Since his marriage a little more importance has been given him, and the number of those who used to call him Monsieur Merry is fast decreasing.

His wife is a good, pretty and honest woman who has only one ambition—to become an embassadress, which she is sure to be one of these days.

Portugal, just at present, has no minister at Berlin and is represented by a simple *charge d'affaires*, Monsieur de Soveral, who is a great favorite with the ladies.

He is very handsome, too handsome. His conquests have surpassed those ever made by any man in Berlin.

All the fashionable ladies think it a point of honor to be compromised by the handsome Portuguese. He is not a wicked man. He is the spoiled darling of the ladies. For a long time he was without a rival, but the arrival of a dashing Austrian military attache robbed him of a little of his glory. Major von Steinger is better suited to the ladies than even Monsieur de Soveral, for he possesses more distinction of person.

The Greek ambassador is Monsieur Rangabe, who is better known on account of literary works than for his political abilities. As for the other diplomatic personages, there are so few of them that a sketch of them would be easy.

France has for Secretary of Legation, Count D'Aubigny, an amiable little man, witty as all boulevardiers, and possessing all the Parisian graces. His wife is slightly eccentric for fear of being commonplace, and is often very impolite.

Sir John Walsham, first secretary of Her Majesty Queen Victoria, is a tall, thin, angular man, a true son of England, and one of those functionaries who accomplish their daily needs more from routine than from ambition or love of travel. He will advance in his career by the law of hierarchy, and will retire from the political arena with the title of minister plenipotentiary, honestly gained. His wife is a little woman of good heart and playing a very ineffective and futile part. A nice person at bottom, but not able to understand the meaning of a word nor the consequences which might result from a little hasty language.

She receives a great deal above all, diplomatists. Not alone the husband, but the wife neither is in the odor of sanctity at their embassadress, who has too much wit not to be annoyed by so much littleness and nonsense.

An amiable, charming, and good woman, although a little too German, is Madame d'Arapoff, wife of the first secretary of the embassy of Russia. Since the twenty years she is living in Berlin, she has acquired the tastes and manners of the city, and to love it, if that is possible, better than her own country. Happily, what she has not been able to assimilate is malevolence, a fault she hasn't got. Madame Arapoff is one of those women who are too much occupied by social duties, the visits, the purchases to make, the dresses to try on, that they have no time to

give to the others. Her life is a continual fete. She adores society so much that she never sees its trivialities or its defects. She has two charming daughters, of whom one is the younger sister by reason of the freshness of her wit.

Very much sought after in society, she is, perhaps, the only example of a diplomatist's wife being acceptable all over. Her country-women of the Russian embassy are jealous of her, and do not love her. It is even said the ambassador himself has not disdained to aid little intrigues to have his first secretary recalled.

I terminate this letter not having, I think, forgotten any important person.

TWENTIETH LETTER.

THE MIDDLE-CLASSES.

If it is possible, I earnestly advise you to try to obtain an introduction to some houses of the middle-classes or to those belonging to that petty nobility which exists only in Germany, and, which by its customs, mode of life, its very opinions, approaches more the middle than the upper-classes.

We must be just, before all, even toward our rivals, and you would have only a false idea of German society if you judged it by the specimen presented by the fashionable drawing-rooms of Berlin.

When we wish to learn the public opinion of a country, it is indispensable for us to address those who represent that opinion. You will not find these people in Berlin except among the small bondholders, minor officials, professors and scientists, but I will make the latter the subject of another letter. At present, I wish to conduct you into one of those worthy and tranquil households where you can see the German as he was before being contaminated by the demoralization of fashionable society.

Follow me, then, and when we return from our pilgrimage, you will perhaps laugh over certain ridiculous things discovered on the way, but you will not regret having undertaken it.

At the outset, we must climb up two, often even three always very steep flights of stairs. If the house belongs to the class of new buildings the stair-case will be of marble with a wrought iron baluster. In the opposite case it will be of wood, but always covered with a frightful carpet, which changes its shade on every floor, according to the taste of the tenant on whose landing it stops. You ring; a girl in an apron and white cap comes to the door and informs you that the "Herrschaften" (translate lords) are at home.

After having removed your overcoat in a sort of very narrow hall, in which the gas burns the whole day, and which takes the place of the ante-chamber, you are introduced into a small parlor in which about ten persons are seated in chairs or in easy-chairs ornamented by small squares made of guipure, the conventional decoration of German interiors. A lamp illuminates the whole room, as also the persons present. Do not forget that it is half past seven o'clock in the evening, the hour at which

civilized people dine. At first sight, the room in which you find yourself seems to you to be the ugliest you have ever seen in your life. The ceiling is painted in a chocolate color, ornamented with birds or red and green landscapes; the walls are equally covered with a horrible green velvet paper, the vulgarity of which is only made more prominent by some paintings and photographs hung here and there.

An enormous clay furnace fills an entire corner of this room, the other one of which is occupied by the piano. An immense sofa, the table which we have already mentioned, and the chairs symmetrically ranged along the wall, complete the furnishing of this so-called parlor.

On the sofa a lady of a certain age is majestically seated; she is listening to the compliments of an infantry officer, who has the air of heroically fulfilling a painful duty; two or three more women are seated a son a throne in the easy-chairs.

One of them is the mistress of the house, who takes possession of you and presents you to the sovereign on the sofa, saying in a sepulchral voice, on account of being penetrated by the grandeur of the title she is about to pronounce: "Her Excellency, Mrs. General de X——." She does not let you begin a conversation with this star, but continues to name to you: "Mrs. Privy Councillor, Mrs. Colonel," and finally introduces her daughter to you, adding, *Das ist mein Lischen* (that is my little Lisa). After that you are at liberty, and you affrightedly ask yourself what will become of you during the two mortal hours you are to spend in this cage.

All these ladies have some knitting in their hands and appear absorbed in a conversation where the price of meat and eggs plays the principal part. They seem to be on a footing of strict ceremony, one toward the other, and address each other by all their titles, not forgetting in any of their phrases that of "excellency," or "very gracious lady." In despair, your eyes rest on the table; you will discover that it is heaped up with books, pamphlets and papers. A sort of light commences to break in on your mind; soon the mistress of the house proposes that you should go and take a smoke with these gentlemen, you accept, and on entering another room you suddenly find yourself transported into another world.

All the men in whose society you find yourself are well educated, polished, well reared, although ignorant of the petty usages of fine society, men of occupation, all having their regular proper work, and capable of fairly judging the literary and scientific events of their time. They have not the polish, the superficial varnish of the fashionable society which assembles in the palace *Unter den Linden*, and which forms the finest ornament of the Thursday receptions of the empress; they do not know how to tie their cravat, and the cut of their frock-coats dates from the last years of the French Empire, but they are ignorant of the petty gossip which circulates among those who surround the emperor. They are simple-minded and their manners are bashful, but their intellectual faculties are well developed and well balanced; it is a pleasure to talk with them

and one always profits by it. Observe that I use the words "intellectual faculties," for, as far as politics are concerned, they are as incapable of judging them and as indifferent about them as persons in high life.

To return to our evening, the time passes, the minutes fly, while from being surprised you become interested. The door opens, the little servant announces supper. The master of the house offers his arm to her excellency, the colonel's wife is assigned to you, and all pass into the dining-room. The embarrassment of the first moments has disappeared. You feel at ease and forget, by degrees, the little ridiculous things in your neighbors.

The repast is most simple; a saddle of venison, salad and fruit, fresh or preserved, according to the season, form the bill of fare.

The guests eat with their knives, put their fingers in the salt-cellar, suck their forks, and wipe their mouths with the back of their hand, but you pardon these improprieties through gratitude for the agreeable hours they enabled you to spend.

When the meal is over, they return to the parlor. The young girl who has been introduced to you by the name of Lischen sits down at the piano, and the evening finishes as gayly as its beginning seemed lugubrious. At half past ten everybody gets ready to leave; the gas is already turned off in the hall and the servant lights you with a candle. Good-night is said, promises are made to see each other again, and her excellency, the wives of the privy councillor and of the colonel return home on foot the same as the lieutenant who had solicitously hovered around their greatness, and who rejoices at having saved the money which so good a supper would have cost him.

As a rule, German society, so corrupted above, so demoralized below, cannot be better appreciated than by a study of the middle classes. There, however, just as among the aristocracy, the inferiority of woman, or, to speak more exactly, the way in which she is relegated to the duties of the household and to the care to be given to her dress, strikes one at first sight. In reality the wide gulf which separates the woman of the middle classes from the fashionable lady lies in her morals. Where the wife of a small bondholder, of an official or even of an officer will sacrifice herself for her family, her husband or her children, reduce herself to the strictest necessity, make herself an unpaid servant, bury her youth and beauty in order to save up the cost of her sons' education, the spouse of a count or baron, sometimes even poorer than the other, will seek for the means of shining in society, and of eclipsing her rivals.

Frequent, then, if you can, these middle-class homes; you will witness there the spectacle of the mother of a family, worthy of all respect in spite of her meanness and ridiculous ways and you will be able, if you can conquer that spirit of raillery which pushes young men to laugh at those whose customs and tastes are not in harmony with their own—you will be able, I say, to penetrate the secrets of the life of the educated, hard-working German, sincerely convinced of the greatness of those who govern him, perceiving no beauty in material things, unable to divine the pleasure of being surrounded by objects to the eye

or the senses, insensible to the beauty of a painting or a statue, indifferent to comfort, but capable of weeping at the reading of a fine piece of poetry, capable of experiencing infinite joys at seeing a plant bloom and flourish, and longing, as a relaxation after a day's toil, to read the pages of a treatise of Darwin, or glance over the last volume of Ranke. It is only the middle-class German who reads. If you enter a public library, you will never find there any one belonging to a more elevated rank in society; the same contrast exists between the officers of the crack regiments of the guards, and of the infantry and artillery. The first are wofully ignorant and self-complacent to the highest degree; they pass their days at the club or in promenading the streets, their nights in dancing; they are almost more effeminate than women, and, in most cases, vainer. The latter, on the contrary, are studious, modest, educated, but appreciated, alas, by persons for whom social pleasures are sealed letters.

This explains why men occupying any post whatever, or thinking something of themselves keep away from the society which you, as a young diplomat, will be obliged to frequent. In no place more than in Germany and more than in Berlin does a greater difference exist between the classes which constitute the nation. Everywhere else a man of talent can issue from the crowd, overturn prejudice, and by the sole force of his genius make himself the equal of all. In Berlin he may render himself useful, even indispensable, he will never attain to being accepted as an equal by those who in default of brains, have ancestors, which is not exactly the same thing. As a result of this barrier raised by pride the men who would be the most competent to successfully accomplish the work of consolidating the German Empire, see themselves so repulsed that they do not even attempt to remove the barriers which separate them from a circle of society inferior in everything but inaccessible.

It is at the entrance to this circle of society, like at the entrance to the Infernal Regions, one must leave hope behind.

TWENTY-FIRST LETTER.

ARTISTS AND SCIENTISTS.

THERE are a great number of artists and scientists in Berlin, but they form among themselves a kind of coterie to which it is very difficult to get access. Generally they are not seen in society except at the crown princess' or the Countess de Schleinitz's. Princess Victoria, enthusiastic on all questions pertaining to art and literature, makes it her duty to protect and encourage the artists and scientists. A great deal of gratitude is due her for her protection. It is positive that since the marriage of the crown prince, things referring to the artistic world have made a great progress. The princess visits the expositions, criticises and judges them, interested herself in the treasures acquired by the museums. Some persons, very few indeed, imitate her example. The movement is still quite restricted, but it is nevertheless a step in the right direction.

Unhappily society through its ignorance is incapable of direct-

ing artistic taste. The burghers have not sufficient authority with the artists; they allow themselves to be swayed by them, and in place of exposing their faults and mistakes in taste, accept blindly and enthusiastically accept the judgments they pass on themselves. The result of this state of affairs is that the artists, being free to choose, have founded a kind of national school, pointing to the traditions of the Renaissance, which up to the present has produced nothing but monstrosities. Nothing equals the fatuity of a German sculptor or painter, except perhaps that of an officer of the *gardes du corps*. They think they have conquered the domain of art just as the German armies have conquered provinces. Obstinate sticking to their own ideas, they wish to force the whole world to adopt them.

Not having relations with an enlightened public, they can give full sway to their extravagances, and little by little will entirely corrupt the taste of their compatriots. What they condemn is the pleasure derived from looking at a pretty object, even if the form is not correct, and they talk against anything which only pleases the eye. According to them everything should have a certain style, the old German style, which is nothing more than a horrible caricature of the Renaissance. This is why their houses are all somber, black, horribly furnished with chairs and closets in sculptured wood, their ceilings decorated with paintings of the new school, representing women in extravagant positions with faded bouquets in their hands. But I am digressing into an article on German taste instead of speaking to you about the artists. I will return to my subject and describe Professor Angeli to you. The professor is a native of Vienna, and has nothing to do here, but he is so often in Berlin, he is so much patronized by the aristocracy of this city, that one can almost count him as one of the inhabitants. His great reputation dates from the time he painted the portraits of the crown prince and the crown princess, who have bought his best works. Since that success, Professor Angeli has been the Benjamin of all the drawing-rooms, and like Benjamin, he has abused his position. He is the most egotistical person in the world. His pride is phenomenal. He thinks the whole world has been created for him alone. He is responsible for his acts, for it seems that in the company of people who are not disposed to tolerate his vanity he can be very modest. Unhappily this does not occur often, and the fashionable ladies of Berlin quietly submit to Professor Angeli's caprices, which would not be tolerated an instant in the house of an *attache*, or a secretary of legation.

Professor Werner, whose paintings of the Congress of Berlin and the Proclamation of the Empire at Versailles were so much admired, is a lean little man with a shrewd face, which is not, however, aggressive. This does not imply, however, that he has a poor opinion of himself, but he is not as vain as the most of his colleagues, more especially the painter Lenbach, whose two or three successes have completely turned his head. Count Ferdinand Harrach is a gentleman painter, an amateur artist working for love of his art, which does not prevent him from charging very high prices for detestable pictures. Less handsome

than Mars, he has made some conquests, notably that of his pretty wife. A man of ability, he is, nevertheless, so imbued with his own superiority that he doesn't credit any of his neighbors with having common sense. He is very amiable, but one divines in his cynical smile how little esteem he has for those whom he disdains to recognize. He is one of the most ardent apostles of the old German style. The crown princess is evidently of the opinion that it is better to be deceived in art matters, rather than not cultivate them at all, and it seems to her that Count Ferdinand Harrach is, at least, a good example. She honors him with her most distinguished consideration, and has even deigned to select him as her cavalier at her masked ball.

The most remarkable in respect to intelligence among the artists whom you will have the pleasure of meeting is, without dispute, Professor Gustave Richter, the best portrait painter Germany possesses to-day. He is neither vain nor ostentatious. He knows what he wants, but has not the pretension to imagine that he surpasses the rest of the world by reason of his talent and genius. He is the only German artist who can be counted in the category of great men. He married Meyerbeer's daughter, and both husband and wife are worthy of our friendship and esteem.

I shall not speak to you of the other painters and sculptors of Berlin. It is sufficient for me to have pointed out the most important ones to you, among whom I had almost forgotten to enumerate the sculptor Begas, a man of great talent, whose wife is celebrated for her beauty. The *fetes* given by the artistic world of Berlin are amusing for any one desirous of being edified by human vanity, for nothing can compare with the disdain with which the German artists speak about those who do not share their ideas and their tastes.

As for their literary and scientific men, there are few remarkable ones in Berlin. Without speaking of Mommsen, Ranke, and Helmholtz, nearly all the professors of the University are men of the highest value and ability, working for the purpose of working, to advance science or clear up some historical points which are still obscure, and not to trumpet their own personal ideas or theories. These courageous pioneers of progress merit our highest respect and most sincere admiration, for they are the only ones in the whole country who are not blinded by false ideas of national glory, who admit the worth of all the nations of the earth, and who, beyond the new German Empire, her armies, her victories, her sovereign, and her all-powerful chancellor, discern a greater thing, nobler still for them, more sublime, for it is the only thing on this earth created in the image of the Maker—"Humanity."

TWENTY-SECOND LETTER.

THE PRESS.

Germany is one of the countries where the press occupies a position out of all proportion to the power it wields. Among the quantity of daily papers which flood the streets of Berlin, there

are only two or three which really have any power with the masses and they are of a very inferior type, such as the *Klein Journal*, a poor imitation of the *Daily News*, and the *Berliner Tageblatt*, which must not be confounded with the *Deutsches Tageblatt*. These two journals are the organs of German humbug and Jewish arrogance. They are read by servant girls and high society, who find alike in them sufficient to satisfy their love for sensational news. It often happens that these papers are obliged to contradict their own assertions, but the public rarely reads the *dement* and carry about from place to place the malicious lies. As for the big sheets they are read mainly in other countries, where people fondly imagine that they represent the opinion for which they fight. It is not so, however, in the two or three journals of the type of the *Germania*, the organ of the clericals, and the *Kreuz Zeitung* the organ of the conservatives.

The entire German press is either in the hands of the Jewish bankers or dependent on the government, which by turns inspires the *Post*, the *Norddeutsche* and the *National Zeitung*, sometimes even the *Kohnische Zeitung*, just as either one or the other of these papers appear favorable to its interests, or according to which one of them would allow itself to be most easily contradicted. In regard to questions which concern the press, as in everything else, Prince Bismarck has his plan. Whenever he desires to know what effect a certain piece of news would cause in the world, he has it immediately printed, taking great care that it should be written in the manner of the organ chosen by him. After all Europe has become alarmed and discussed it thoroughly and the chancellor's object has been gratified, he has the news denied by an official note in the *Norddeutsche*. And the good critical soul pours hot shot into those who had the perversity to declare that an independent journal had any relations with the government.

The *Norddeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* is the only sheet which is continually in the pay of the ministry of foreign affairs. When the ambassador of a foreign power comes to the *Wilhelm Strasse* to complain of a particularly venomous article against his country, a thousand excuses are made to him, ignorance of any knowledge that the article had crept into the paper is alleged, and in the morning without contradicting the affirmations of the day before, the *Norddeutsche* publishes a paragraph for the purpose of appeasing the wrath raised against her. This paper gives the tone to all the others and rarely takes back its assertions.

The editors are only there as a matter of form. All the official articles are manufactured in the ministry of foreign affairs and submitted to the decision of the chancellor.

Whenever Bismarck has need of having an opinion made known in a certain quarter, which would not be out of place in the *Norddeutsche*, and which would not carry sufficient weight in the other papers, he chooses the *Post*, a so-called conscientious, so-called conservative, a so-called independant paper, of whose integrity a great many people are convinced. The aid of the *Post* is called into requisition whenever the chancellor wishes

to win over the pious *grand seigneurs*, subscribers to the *Kreuz Zeitung* and that crowd of scarecrows who have always before their eyes the night-mare of social revolution. The assertions of the *Post* are seldomer contradicted than those of other papers; it is the olive branch which will reconcile, should it ever become necessary, the government with the adherents of the clerical party.

As to the *National Zeitung*, the organ of Lasker and the National Liberals, it formerly vigorously supported the government in its fight against the Catholics. Since the party it represents has quarreled with the chancellor, the *National Zeitung* has also broken off from him, but this paper has still certain attachments to its former ally, when it is required to fight the common enemy, clericalism. The chancellor takes advantage of this, whenever he wishes to conciliate the enemies of Herr von Windthorst's party. This newspaper, regarded as dangerous in high places, can be contradicted without fear, if a new maneuver of Bismarck's renders it necessary.

As to the *Konische Zeitung*, it is the advance-guard of the chancellor. Its duty is to keep watch on foreign powers, unravel their ambitious secrets and reveal their dissensions, their financial embarrassments and the fictitious power of their armies. It is she, also, whose mission it is to keep German patriotism alive, to re-awaken the national pride and to give the final signal to the trumpet that sounds the hour of battle.

Published outside of Berlin and regarded as the best informed paper in Germany, as well as one of the richest, keeping everywhere correspondents more or less fantastic, the *Konische Zeitung* is reputed in foreign countries to be an independent paper, although its opinions are prejudiced and its hates extremely violent. Very few people know that its inspirations are received direct from Bismarck's office; the latter taking advantage of the high position occupied by the paper to excite the bad instinct of the Nationalists, irritate the foreign press, provoke its rage and then heap reproaches upon it.

This shows that Prince Bismarck has everywhere and always several strings to his bow and plays with the press as with everything else. In the same way he governs the foreign correspondents who say, think, and do only what pleases the chancellor. Those who are corrupt, obey; those who are independent are circumspect; those who are hostile are deceived.

Bismarck knows in this way how to influence foreign correspondents by a sort of famine, which chases them far away from the truth, like wolves from the forest. When they have nothing to write, they manufacture, like Russian journalists, fictitious news, or else like the *Times*, they are reduced to the necessity of describing Lord Amthill's balls and dinners.

Among all the journals only two are really free from all solidarity with the government and free to do as they please—viz., the *Kreuz Zeitung* and the *Germania*. The first named is patronized by the fashionable world, who find therein detailed descriptions of all the court balls, births, marriages, and deaths. The mere fact of being a subscriber to the *Kreuz Zeitung* is a

testimonial of respectability. It is an arch-Protestant and arch-tiresome paper. Its saint is Luther, its hero Pastor Kogel, its enemies all those to whom the word progress is not abominable. One hundred years behind the age, the *Kreuz Zeitung* has always been a favorite of Bismarck. It pushes its scruples so far, in regard to the veracity of its news, as not to publish it until it has received the consecration of time and passed into the field of ancient history. It is perpetually at war with the *Germania*, whose Catholicism it detests. This last sheet, more Catholic than the pope, it distinguishes itself by the ardor with which it deals with polemics, and by the bitterness it displays in every kind of discussion. Tact is a virtue it does not possess, and Christian charity is totally foreign to its nature. "Religion without charity" ought to be its motto.

I will not speak to you of the *Fremdenblatt*, a paper given over entirely to stupid gossip. It shares with the *Berliner Tageblatt* the favor of the officers and ladies of Berlin, who both find therein, after a ball, descriptions of the toilets and the names of their friends. As a rule, all papers devoted to a recital of the gossip and scandal of the day are in great vogue in high society. The journalists profit by this in either augmenting their subscription list by dishing up a new scandal every morning, or else by extorting blackmail from dupes, by threatening to compromise them by revealing certain phases of their private life.

This species of trade caused not long ago a celebrated law-suit in which figured an ex-army officer, the wearer of an aristocratic name and allied to the best families in the country. For one who has escaped from this extortion, how many are there who submit to their fate without a murmur, and who have paid dearly for the silence they deem absolutely indispensable in their social position.

The newspaper which is most read in Berlin among this class is the *Boersen Courier*, the organ of the green-room and the stock exchange. The editors of this paper are at present in prison. One reads therein sometimes true and sometimes fictitious stories. On all questions except money, the opinions of this paper are of no account.

TWENTY-THIRD LETTER.

THE CHANCELLOR'S DUPES.

I must not forget to speak to you about a certain class of individuals, with some specimens of which you will have occasion to come into contact, and whom I cannot qualify, except with the name of the chancellor's ravens, in memory of our friend La Fontaine. They are persons, more or less intelligent, always supple and adroit, often insinuating, whose manners and education leave nothing to be desired, and who, devoured by a frenzied ambition, have made themselves Herr von Bismarck's slaves, whom they often serve, without suspecting it, as—how shall I say? spies would be too strong a term, informers too weak; let us say, they are persons who, through devotion to themselves, have undertaken the task of dissipating the cause of their pow-

erful protector's sleepless nights, by relating to him the events of the day, the doings and actions of different persons suspected, in high places, of having political opinions.

Having no taste for fairy-tales, like the sultan in the Arabian Nights, the chancellor likes to be amused by anecdotes. He likes still more to possess some souls secretly damned; his scent of a thoroughbred dog soon discovers them to him, and he at once hastens to attract them by persuading them that they have wit, talent, in fine, every sort of quality; and, what is more important, to give them the assurance that they enjoy his (the chancellor's) entire confidence. In a word, Herr von Bismarck becomes a fox in order to betray some little ravens, to whom he gives cheese instead of taking it away.

It is rare that this cheese is of the first quality, but a slice of humble Swiss cheese, eaten in company with the prince, is often preferable to a cut of Chester devoured in solitude. On this principle, many persons make desperate efforts to obtain a piece of the former, but alas! this piece resembles the fatal fruit of the tree of knowledge. It makes you giddy. Once having tasted it, you no longer belong to yourself; you become ambitious, cruel, cowardly; you sacrifice everything—honor, sentiments—to the desire of being in greater favor, to the pride of being praised by the master who owns you.

The compacts formed between Herr von Bismarck and his auxiliaries, whom he secretly uses, are never anything else than understandings; frequently, even, the persons who have signed them are ignorant of the terms of the contract which binds them. They only know that the chancellor finds them worth something, invites them to Varzin, becomes intimate with them, makes them talk, shows an interest in their views: that, in fine, for one reason or another, their career takes an extraordinary bound, develops in a manner peculiarly favorable to their interests. They are ignorant, these worthy people, or feign ignorance, of what good fairy it is to whose influence they owe their rapid promotion, but at each new proof of the favors which providence bestows on them, they pay a visit to the chancellor, who receives them cordially, congratulates them, and repeats to them: "I am happy that a man of your talents is at last appreciated."

Among the individuals thus appreciated, two or three are in the department of foreign affairs, others, soldiers or civilians, move about in society where they are splendidly received, and where few suspect the role they play.

You, yourself, however much on your guard you may be, will find it difficult to distinguish them, and most of the time you will fall into the snare which their always exquisite affability and their politeness, so superior to that of Germans in general, will stretch for you.

The presence of these animated telephones, constitutes, none the less, a serious peril to life at Berlin, for the slightest sincere word let drop among bosom friends may be repeated to him who is criticised and may assume, from the very fact of its being repeated, an importance not intended to be attached to it. Therefore don't talk politics while you are in Berlin, or, if you

do so, praise, praise all and everything, even and especially what you disapprove.

Try to avoid every risky expression, confine yourself to the most ordinary commonplaces; remember, that not only walls, but even the air has ears; and that, in these progressive times, one can with the aid of a telephone hear at Potsdam what is said in Berlin. I will not mention the names of the persons who it seems to me, ought to belong to the class I have just described. What good would it do to unmask their *incognito*? What good, especially, to deprive them of their illusions; to tell them that they owe the chancellor's protection not to their merit, but to their utility, and that a time will come when, their usefulness being no longer necessary, they will sink back into the obscurity from which a less shrewd mind than Herr von Bismarck's would never have sought to draw them?

Only; I repeat again and always, Beware, beware, be even more on your guard with the young men who speak all languages fluently, who have traveled much, and possess a certain number of foreign decorations, polite with the diplomats (this is a grave sign), always around women, welcome at court, sought after in society and seldom going to the department of foreign affairs. Besides these secret gentleman, the chancellor has other proteges, openly confessed ones, and entirely avowable. Such, for example, is Herr Lindau, a brother of Paul Lindau, the writer, whom you must have already met. He is strong-minded, having all the distinctive qualities of the Jewish race: energy, tact, shrewdness, clear and level judgment, extraordinary facility in handling the pen, and ambitious to rise by his own merits. Very cordially received by the imperial princess, Herr Rudolph Lindau merits the favor which the heiress of the throne accords him. He is one of the best attaches of the department of foreign affairs. he has so far succeeded in avoiding the disfavor of the *deus ex machina* of his department. One rarely sees him in society, where he is received with a certain disdain on account of his Hebrew origin.

A charming conversationalist, you will, however, find him much more reserved at home than abroad; for at Berlin everybody fears a false interpretation of his thought. I doubt, for this very reason, whether he will encourage you to visit him often; he would, however, be a useful and profitable acquaintance for you. Do not reckon, however, that he may furnish you with any information; he is very niggardly on this point.

I greatly regret, for your sake, Herr von Radowitz's absence from Berlin; he is one of the most curious types I know. Skilled, adroit, supple and intelligent, able to adapt himself to all situations, to tell a falsehood, when necessary, with the most imperturbable coolness, to opportunely flatter, at times to contradict, to praise when expedient, he has, with all these merits, one fault—an impetuous character, sometimes dangerous for a diplomat, for it may draw him away from his aim, and, in any case, it gives rise to apprehensions in him who employs him that he will not execute to the letter, and, in the same spirit, the instructions he receives. He is, moreover, vain, and cannot re-

strain his self-love, too accessible to flattery. He easily surrenders his secret to those who know how to praise him in order to become its depository. Greatly impassioned in his enthusiasm for the chancellor, he occasionally is lacking in tact, and forgets that if Germany has the right to be proud, her representatives have the duty not to be insolent. Such as he is, however, Herr von Radowitz may be regarded, if not one of the best, at least one of the most adroit and amiable diplomatic agents which Germany has.

His colleagues openly reproach him with blundering; but in certain cases this may be a merit, and Herr von Bismarck in his changeable and abrupt policy may be often happy in having a representative whom he can disavow.

Often, when seeking or desiring a war, people able to provoke it, like Herr von Radowitz, become precious auxiliaries. At present he is in Constantinople to replace Count Paul von Hatzfeld there, and probably also to annoy Russia and to irritate the nerves of its *charge d'affaires*, M. de Nelidoff, who is said to be very sensitive.

I do not know how Herr von Radowitz stands his trips to the banks of the Bosphorus; but of this I am sure, he finds himself in his element in the midst of the intrigues of every kind in which Oriental politics move, and against which the unfortunate Commander of the Faithful strives.

To embroil the people among themselves, then to reconcile them, to have his hands kissed by both friend and foe, that is a work which in all its aspects suits the son of the Radowitz, the friend of the mystical Frederick William IV., whom Saint Rene Taillandier has so well painted in his fine book, "Ten Years of the German Empire."

I will only mention, in passing, among Prince Bismarck's proteges, Herr Busch, the author of the famous work on the chancellor which created so great a sensation two or three years ago. He is a friend whom one disavows, who has been allowed to have his own way, because, as it is said, he could not be prevented, and who is censured and blamed for the impropriety of his revelations.

He must know the chancellor very poorly, and take the power over which he disposes very little into consideration, who admits for a single instant that Herr Busch would have dared to publish his book without having previously submitted the whole text to Herr von Bismarck and received from him the right to print it. The prince rather likes this sort of indiscretion, which allows him to make known, indirectly, to the public the private sides of his character, as also certain opinions which he cannot otherwise express than in private. The publication of the work *Fuerst Bismarck und seine Leute* has been a sort of recompense accorded by the chancellor to a man who had been useful to him, and to whom he granted in the guise of salary the right to depict his ordinary every-day life. Herr von Bismarck knows too well the people governed by Caesarism not to know that they must be amused either in giving them, under some form, bread and cir-

cuses, or in handing over to their eager curiosity the spectacle of the private life of a great man.

In short, to understand Germany well and to observe it with profit, one must study it, comprehend it, judge it at the present time where it appears to have assimilated its conquests and where a near future will direct it in new pathways.

One asks oneself to-day, what will become of *it* when the old emperor, his all-powerful minister, the Moltkes and Manteuffels, the men of another age living in our century, shall have disappeared. When in their place there shall be a king who has been able, without contributing to it, to experience what an absolute military government is, but to whom the situation, his works, his recreations, his travels, and even his wife's nationality, have given an entirely different character, and, perhaps, the desire to govern Germany in a liberal sense. What difficulties would he find in the traditions of a system which has made imperial Germany? What resistance would he find in an army organized for conquest? In a middle class not yet ready to assume power? In a demoralized and, in some cases, disorganized press? What aid could be rendered him by ambitious persons incapable of assuming any responsibilities with which they have become unfamiliar? Added to all these unfavorable elements is socialism, which has been nourished and strengthened by Bismarck, who himself is unable to cope with it and which threatens to rise daily. Then one can predict that the position of the emperor's successor will be a difficult, and, perhaps, inextricable one. Can he find in the army itself that sacrificial spirit which would allow him to reduce it? Would he find in the public officials, torn away from submission, the necessary ability to carry out great reforms? Would the same generation which has seen brute force triumph everywhere be inspired with the necessary ardor to hold itself open to moral force and justice?

It would require, to lead a nation so little prepared for it into such paths, a prince with an energetic spirit, of lofty aspirations, with a firm hand, unmindful of premature popularity, but knowing that history would give in its tablets, beside the place of a conqueror, an equal place to a great legislator.

[THE END.]

THE BANK SECRET.

A SHORT STORY.

CHAPTER I.

THERE had been a full half-minute of elegant silence at the tea-table of old John Belford, the banker.

"Gideon!" The old-fashioned name seemed set to a sort of conversational music by the rich, full tones which uttered it, and it was followed, in default of any instant reply, by "I'm going to do you a very great favor."

"Right away? Well, I'm ready; all my firmness rallied."

"No, sir; you may finish your tea."

"And then the astonishment?"

"You can have that now. I've tickets for the concert at the Academy to-morrow night, and you're to take me."

"Ruth, my dear!"

Mrs. Belford, from behind the tea-urn, said that quite suddenly, and Gideon showed his presence of mind by promptly remarking:

"Mrs. Belford, I'm deeply obliged to you. Those are the very words, only I should not have dared——"

The lady of the house was not at that moment smiling upon her husband's big, yellow-haired step-son. She even in a manner cut him off by repeating, in a tone of reproof:

"Ruth, my dear!" and then, after a dignified pause, she added: "Did not Mr. Marvin Belford speak to you about this very concert?"

"Did he?" growled old John Belford from the other end of the table. "Then Ruth's right. Self-preservation is the first law of nature."

"Ruth," said Gideon, "I'm your man. I'll save you at any cost."

"It will cost you nothing at all, sir, and the music will be good. Besides, I shall wear a new dress, and be unusually handsome. You will be a much-envied man."

"And Marvin will love me better than ever, and I shall be happy," he responded.

Gideon Street did not look a man to be much troubled by the opinions of other people, particularly of anybody he was just thinking of. Neither did he bear the customary marks of a general favorite among men or women.

It is not easy to make a pet of a broad-shouldered, bearded Viking, with steel-grey eyes and a deep voice.

Through all the explanatory remarks which followed he was profoundly polite to Mrs. Belford, and a little more so to Ruth, but there was all the while a species of suppressed chuckle in ambush behind the politeness.

"Ruth Faraday," exclaimed Mrs. Belford, at last, "you are much too severe upon your cousin. Marvin Belford is one of Nature's noblemen."

"He's not a cousin of mine, Aunt Carrie, and I must say I think Nature might have done better."

"And not half try," muttered Gideon Street.

But at that moment Mr. Belford said to his wife:

"Now, Carrie, you must let us go. I want a talk with Gid in the library about some business matters. You can have him, Ruth, after I've done with him."

"I don't want him, Uncle John. I'll be perfectly fair. He need not come near me again until it's time to start for the concert."

"That's fair," said Gideon.

"And even then I won't expect him to talk. All he really need do is to look round him and smile now and then, after I've led him to the right seats."

Her dark brilliant eyes were dancing with fun, and Gideon, as he slowly rose from the table, thrust his face half-way across it with a remarkable contortion of its manly features as he asked:

"Would this do?"

"Not if there were children."

"Well, you must put me in mind you know. I can smile."

An hour or so later, without any smile at all upon his face, Gideon Street came out of John Belford's library. He carried in one hand a leathern valise of respectable size, and on his hasty march toward the front door he muttered;

"Good! company in the parlor. Shan't have to answer any questions."

Behind him, in the well-lighted, luxurious library, the stalwart, grim old banker sat by the table in the center, very much as if he were listening for the sound of the closing of the front door. It came—a sharp, decisive sound—and his heavy fist fell upon the table with a thud.

"That's attended to. I believe I can trust him. There'll be music all round before a great while, but I don't believe I shall hear much of it. The rest of them will all have tickets."

There was mention making of tickets and music at that very moment in the parlor, for, although Mr. Marvin Belford had been there some time, he had been but a few minutes in the enjoyment of Ruth Faraday's conversation.

He was not so tall or so strong a man as Gideon Street, but he was much better looking, his eyes and hair were darker, and he was dressed with more care.

His response to Ruth's entering salutation had been made with a grace which did him credit, but they two, had they been listening, might have heard the street door open and shut just as the young lady innocently remarked:

"The concert? Splendid? Yes, it will be, no doubt. Mr. Street has promised to take me."

"Con—h'm! You're booked already! Too late, am I? Now, Ruth, you might have known I'd come. Gid Street, too!"

"Well, yes, I did think you possibly might, but I could not run any risk. I'm of age now, these three days, and it's made me ever so much wiser than I used to be."

"Nothing could make you more beautiful, Ruth."

"Now, Mr. Belford, you must call me Miss Farraday. I am quite taken with my new dignity, and I mean to claim all its advantages."

"What! With me, Ruth?"

"Certainly. Why not?"

"I've known you from childhood. You used to call me cousin, and Marvin, and——"

There was a touch of earnestness in his voice and manner, enough to suggest something more than a whim in Ruth's forethought concerning the concert.

Her interruption was badly matter-of-fact.

"Oh, yes, Mr. Belford, that's all very true; but I insist upon being a grown-up young lady now. Call me Miss Farraday, and tell me whom you'll take to the concert, now I'm out of the question."

"Nobody on earth."

"Now, Mr. Belford! You're not acquainted anywhere else? Why can't you be good and unselfish, just for once, and go for some homely girl?"

"I declare I will! I'll get the ugliest, worst dressed, most ill-tempered, cross-eyed——"

"Poor, too; don't forget that."

The rest of that conversation was not worth reporting on behalf of Marvin Belford.

It was a relief to him, at last, when Mrs. John Belford came into the parlor, called him her "dear nephew," and gave him the stately kiss of an admiring aunt.

It is quite possible she might have been doing better service in the library at that moment in the part of a devoted wife.

There sat the banker yet, by the table, his gray head bowed upon his fat, wrinkled hands, and the voice which came through them almost sepulchral:

"I can't quite make up my mind to it, but I know it's coming. It has waited a long time, but it will not wait much longer now. Glad I can trust Gid. It's a strange thing to think of, after all these years. Coming, coming. I cannot make up my mind to it. She is a good girl, and I've loved her ever since she was born."

CHAPTER II.

THERE were five persons whose rank or duty gave them access to the ample vault of Belford Brothers, the well-known and highly-respected banking-house.

Of these, the first two, the heads of the house, John and his

brother William, rarely looked into it. Those who did so more frequently were the junior partner, Mr. Marvin Belford; the spectacled bookkeeper, Mr. Ruggles; and Mr. Gideon Street, in his confidential capacity of teller.

The minor dignitaries of the ancient house could all say, indeed, that they had often looked in upon the somber security of that iron-bound cell, they had even awe-struck memories of having put their feet inside it; but not one of them had been intrusted with the magic numbers of the combination which controlled the opening of the massive lock.

But on the day after the events just narrated, there were five consecutive visitors to the vault, and each in turn found some attraction for his eyes in a large, oblong package, tied with cross-belts of red tape, which lay a little by itself on one of the lower shelves.

The ancient bookkeeper did not touch the package, but he bent his white head over it as he said:

"Miss Faraday's bonds? Well, they've a special deposit, but I wish they were somewhere else. It won't do for me to meddle; but her uncle ought to look out for that. I forgot; Mr. John Belford does not know exactly."

He shut his lips tightly and went out, and his place was shortly taken by the portly form of Mr. William Belford, more grimly and stately than his brother John, and more a walking assurance of financial solvency.

He glanced around the vault to see that all was right, and his cold eyes rested on the package:

"Ruth's fortune, eh? We must look out for that, for Marvin's sake. I must tell John to put it somewhere else. He doesn't know the real condition of things, but I can give him a reason for it."

His heavy, stately tread passed out of the vault, and he may have been correct as to his brother's ignorance of peril to that package, for in less than ten minutes John Belford was regarding "Ruth's fortune" with an iron smile, and hoarsely chuckling over it.

"That's safe, at all events. I owed that much to her mother. I'm glad nobody can touch it!"

It was necessary, a little later, for Gideon Street to carry into the vault a small japanned tin box, and the smile he turned upon the tape-belted parcel would have answered him admirably for skirmish uses at the concert the coming evening.

"There it is. Ruth is more of an heiress than I thought for. The old gentleman's managed well for her.

The smile faded as he spoke, and its place was taken by a crimson flush and then by a singular paleness.

"They're not for you, Gideon, my boy. Any fool can see that. Do your duty, but don't let it make a fool of you."

Excellent words to be uttered in a bank-vault, whether as a riddle or an exhortation, and when he had taken one more look he returned to his post in the main office.

It was late in the day before Mr. Marvin Belford found any

occasion for crossing that iron threshold, and when he did so there were no eyes upon him.

He had a deposit to make, taking it from a traveling-bag which he carried in his hand. It was an oblong package, fastened curiously with red tape, and when he put it down on the shelf beside Ruth Faraday's fortune he was entirely justified in remarking:

"No man alive could tell them apart. Even the tape is of the same width and the creases in the paper come exactly right. A perfect pair of twins."

He was evidently pleased with the comparison he was making, but at the end of it he picked up one of the "twins" and slipped it into the traveling-bag. A change of mind, doubtless, and he had decided not to leave his deposit in the vault for he carried that bag with him in his cab after banking hours when he went home. He seemed in low spirits, too, all the way, and it was probably well for him that he had in prospect an evening of amusement.

He went to the concert, truly, but he had failed to comply with the charitable suggestion of Ruth Faraday, for she, herself, could claim no great advantages over the jeweled belle at the side of Marvin Belford.

"Shall I smile on him, Ruth?" asked Gideon. "I want to."

"Do, please, your very best. It's just what I've been doing."

"Yes, I saw; and he tried to smile back. Failed awfully. I'll give him a chance to try it again if I can catch his eye. He loves me."

"There! you hit him."

There are a few things which Ruth either had not yet learned or had forgotten.

For instance, you may know a man for years and years, and you may respect him exceedingly; he may even be your uncle's step-son and live a good while in the same house with you, and yet you may not become the least bit in the world intimate with him, especially if you have it in your mind that you half-way dislike him and can't tell why. If, however, you begin to let him slip from "old acquaintance" into "old friend," there is no telling how far he will slip along that line—or you either. It is a very slippery line.

That night, however, Ruth was in remarkable high spirits, and Gideon had something upon his mind which absolutely compelled him to smile occasionally.

Mrs. John Belford had retired before her husband's niece returned from the concert; but he was still up, and he waylaid Ruth as she passed the library door.

"Come in, my dear," he said, as he slowly returned to his seat by the table.

"What is it, Uncle John?" Her fair face was yet flushed with excitement and pleasure as she stepped lightly in, but she quickly added, "Are you not well? Is there anything the matter?"

He was looking in her face earnestly and lovingly, but there

was a white, strange shade on his own, as of suppressed and bitter pain.

"Nothing at all, my dear. Listen to me; can you keep a secret?"

She was serious enough now, as she listened to those deep, ominous, all but tremulous tones.

"I can. Try me."

"It may not seem a great one just now, but you must keep it. You are good friends with Gideon?"

"Good enough, Uncle John, especially this evening."

"The music was good?"

"A splendid concert. But what about Gideon?"

"He is a man to be trusted. In a little while it will be necessary for you to trust some one. Trust him. Not anybody else."

"Not even you?"

"No, not even me. I am an old rascal. He is young and honest. No matter what turns up, trust Gideon Street."

"What can you mean?"

"Go to bed now. Keep your secret. One of these days you will know what I mean."

She tried again, but there was no breath of explanation to be obtained from the old gentleman. His face grew hard and his voice harsh, but he kept to himself all the remainder of his secret.

The next day things seemed to go on as usual, but if John Belford had intended a deep and cunning plot to increase the distance in Ruth Faraday's behavior to Gideon, he had planned well and with complete success. Even smiles across the table died like flowers in frost. Gideon took it all with external calmness, and Ruth could not complain of any attempt on his part to break the barrier of ice she had so unaccountably raised.

The days went by for about a fortnight, in a curiously, chilly way, considering how fine was the bright October weather, and then there came a great sensation to a very wide, social and financial "circle."

Gideon Street carried it down to the bank and delivered it to Mr. William Belford and his son Marvin on their arrival. A telegram earlier sent had missed them.

"Apoplexy? Dead in bed? Marvin, come right in with me. This is an awful blow!"

In half a minute more the two were closeted in the private parlor of the bank, leaving Gideon and Mr. Ruggles to spread the sensation as customers came in.

"Father," asked Marvin, "had you any suspicion of such a danger?"

"Knew he'd been in fear of it this long time. He was under medical treatment. Well, he's gone! Marvin, this will precipitate matters. This will be a rough day, but you can keep all steady while I drive to John's house and back. I'll see Carrie and give some directions, and then we must prepare——"

"For a storm? No, I don't see how it can come to-day."

"It will come. I've been fighting it off these ten years."

"Nobody knows there's any deficit more than they did yesterday."

"You're not as old as I am. I can feel it in my bones."

He hurriedly left the bank and drove away, and it did seem for awhile as if he had been under some mistake. Not a breath of suspicion had ever blown upon the credit of Belford Brothers.

In this, their hour of trial, they were entitled to all imaginable sympathy and business courtesy, and it was lavishly extended to them, especially the sympathy, in many and varied expressions thereof.

Still, as the day went by and after William Belford's return, a good many people seemed to be in need of money, and those who had any right to draw on Belford Brothers "at sight" began to do so.

"We've weathered it, father," said Marvin, at three o'clock.

"How about to-morrow?"

"Well, the funeral won't be till the day after that——"

"John's or the concern's? I tell you, my boy, there is something in the air. That thing will have to come out if we suspend. There is one thing we might do——"

"Not with my consent."

"Never mind, now. I will think about it. That would tide us over, and we could arrange afterward."

"Never! And we can weather it just as well without."

"Don't you be too sanguine. You'd better look in at John's with me on our way to town."

That had been a dark day at the banker's elegant residence. Gideon Street had been glad to get away from it in the morning on the plea of business necessity.

He had discovered before going that his affection for his step-father had been stronger than he knew, and so the blow fell on him the more heavily.

He had also been astonished at the extreme grief expressed by Ruth Faraday, but he had been greatly puzzled by a thing he heard her whispering to herself as she leaned above the cold face of her uncle:

"I know now a part of what he meant. What can the rest of it be? This was coming then, and he knew it."

Gideon had not heard Mrs. Belford say, in the shelter of the curtained window:

"I'm glad my own property is settled on me. William will be in control of everything else."

Nevertheless it was not without some show of reason that Gideon had remarked to Ruth before he left the house:

"I will say just one word. I'm glad there's one person beside myself with heart enough to be genuinely sorry."

"Why, Gideon, I loved him."

"He loved you, too, and you will know it some day."

"I'm sure he thought everything of you. But I can't talk now. Do you think they will come here right away?"

"Of course they will. I don't mean to be here when they come."

Ruth was within a breath of saying, "I wish you would," but

she did not say it, and so when William Belford and Marvin called to mingle their grief with that of the stricken household Gideon was not there.

CHAPTER III.

It was the middle of the day before the funeral, and the inner parlor of the old banking-house contained only Mr. William Belford and his son. Business went on in the outer office in a manner strictly conformed to the needs and proprieties of so somber a state of affairs.

"Marvin, it's only a loan."

"I protest!"

"You have no rights as yet. If you and Ruth were already married it would be different. I am my brother's sole executor."

"What of that, father? Ruth is of age. This is her own private property. You've no control. I doubt if Uncle John would have any right if he were alive."

"It's a deposit, Marvin. I won't break if I can help it."

The oblong, tape-bound package lay on the table before him, and he tore it open with a movement so sudden that Marvin's outstretched hand was all too late.

"What! What is this?"

"Mere waste paper!"

"Whose work is this?"

It was hard to say which face of those two was changing color and expression the more rapidly as their eyes glanced from each other to the heap of trash on the table.

"Could Uncle John——"

"No, indeed! Nor old Ruggles. This is worse than the deficit. It is utter and everlasting ruin."

"There is but one other man."

"Gideon! Call him in."

In a moment more Mr. William Belford was sternly pointing to the contents of Ruth Faraday's special deposit and demanding:

"What does this mean, Mr. Street?"

"Rubbish, I should say. Why?"

"What do you think about it?"

"Nothing at all."

"Mr. Street, do you know we have found a large deficit in the books of this house?"

"Perfectly well."

"And now here is this robbery, evidently committed by some one who had access to the vault."

"It looks very bad, indeed."

Not a hair of Gideon's yellow beard and mustaches flinched, but the latter had a quiver in them as if they were beginning to curl a little.

"Have you any explanation to offer?" thundered the banker.

"Possibly I have. The plundering has been done quite

systematically. I think it has required co-operative labor—say of two persons at least.”

“Sir, I will have you arrested!”

“A scapegoat would certainly be desirable, but I doubt if I am the right man. I shall certainly refuse to serve.”

“Leave the room, sir!”

“I will, and I shall also immediately leave the bank, but not the city. I shall not run away, Mr. Belford.”

“Go, sir! go!”

He went not hastily, nor as one who had fight in his mind.

“Marvin, this is awful! We can stand it through to-day.”

“To-morrow is the funeral, next day Sunday. We shall not open our doors again, father, now those drafts are coming.”

“We can’t pay ten shillings in the pound, but we’ll keep a-going till three o’clock.”

So they did, but the air was becoming mysteriously filled with rumors undefined concerning the stability of the bereaved firm. It was surprising how many men were ready to remark:

“I don’t know about it; John was the backbone of the house.”

And he was dead, and that very evening his brother was compelled to remark to his widow:

“There will be nothing to divide, Carrie.”

“What, William! Nothing?”

“Not a penny. There has been a heavy defalcation, heavy losses on top of it. Quite a run now, and more coming. The house will go into bankruptcy to-morrow.”

“Oh, Mr. Belford,” suddenly exclaimed Ruth, whose ears had lost no word he had been saying, “can I not help you? There are my bonds, take them. Uncle John said he had more than doubled the amount left me.”

Mrs. Belford was staring at her brother-in-law in open-eyed astonishment, while he on his part seemed struggling with a great gasp of some kind, as he turned his head away from the tearful generosity in Ruth Faraday’s face.

“Your bonds, my dear! There has been a robbery as well as a defalcation. Your fortune is all gone—every penny of it.”

“Robbery? All gone? Who could have done it?”

“It’s all a robbery!” all but screamed Mrs. Belford. “Who did it? William, who did it?”

“Be calm, Carrie, be calm. It’s an awful state of affairs. Tell me, did Gideon Street come home to supper?”

“Yes, he was here to supper, and he went out again.”

“I doubt if you will see him again very soon. Thank you for your kind offer, Ruth. It is time for me to go.”

“Do you suspect Gideon?”

“I will not say more now.”

“I will, then,” said Ruth, firmly. “I do not suspect him. You must not do anything against him so far as I am concerned.”

“My dear, generous-hearted girl, things must take their own course.”

There was nothing Ruth could think of in reply to that, and,

after Mr. Belford withdrew, she had quite enough to do in soothing the now hysterical grief of the bankrupt's widow. Only one gleam of common-sense broke through the black cloud of all that wifely sorrow.

"Ruth Faraday," she said, "how could you be such a fool! If your fortune had been in your own hands you'd have lent it to them, and you'd have lost it. It's just as well somebody stole it. I'm glad mine's safe, what there is of it. What will become of you?"

That was a question with which Ruth had not yet begun to wrestle, but she saw that it must come, by the light of the flash Mrs. Belford let in upon her.

She said nothing at the moment, but she did a great deal of thinking all that evening while she sat alone in the library wondering when Gideon Street would return, and what could keep him so late.

So late? It was very late; and the thought whispered to her at last that she would rather not see him when he came in, for she would not dare to tell him the dreadful things Mr. William Belford had said of him.

Gideon chose his own hour, but he did return, and he was at the breakfast-table next morning. He was all alone, for neither of the ladies came down.

Then he went to his own room, and, some hours later, none of those who gathered to join in the solemn ceremonials of the occasion perceived, in his behavior or in that of any member of the Belford family, a trace of improper feeling, only the uncommunicative reserve of men and women in affliction.

Perhaps it was as much Ruth's fault as any one's that Gideon Street and not Marvin Belford assisted her to a carriage and took a vacant seat beside her.

All the proprieties were duly observed, but in less than an hour after the return from the funeral a couple of gentlemen called to see Mr. Street, and he went out with them and did not return that day. He did not even leave word where he was going, or send back any message to inform his anxious friends why he should not come back.

CHAPTER IV.

THAT Saturday night it was well known in the financial community that Belford Brothers would never again open their doors for business. It was known, too, that there were "some particularly nasty features" about the failure.

Mr. Marvin Belford's own room was, therefore, the most comfortable place for him to be in, and he was there; but he had been somewhere else first.

He had spent an hour with Ruth Faraday just after tea, and he was evidently thinking about her now as he sat and stared at the small bit of burning sea-coal in the grate before him.

"I've been too fast with Ruth," he said, aloud. "She's feeling awfully cut up just now. I ought to have waited. She'll come round, of course, when she wakes up to the facts of the

case. Hasn't a glimmer of an idea what it is to work for a living. I shall have to play poor for awhile; but it beats me what I'm to do about those things just now. It's a queer secret to keep, but I'll keep it. Yes, I will, if I have to keep it forever!"

There was something harshly husky in his voice as he uttered the last words. He rose and walked slowly to a trunk in a corner.

The door of the room was already locked, so that he was in no danger of intrusion, while he drew from the trunk and placed upon his table an oblong, tape-bound package, remarking:

"I'll see what there is of it."

In about half a minute more he had seen, and he was staggering back from the table with a large white envelope in his hand. On the table, released from its careful wrapping, was a heap of old letters and other worthless things, and Marvin Belford had not yet found a single word to express the feeling of astounded disappointment with which he had stripped their mockery bare.

That one envelope had lain on top, and it was addressed in a large, firm hand to "William Belford, Esq."

"I may as well open it."

He did so, and the broad sheet of paper he unfolded from it bore only these words:

"We are even now, my dear brother. Let us divide the deficit between us. You will not be able to lay your hands upon Ruth's fortune just now. Affectionately, JOHN BELFORD."

"Divide it between them?" gasped Marvin. "I thought as much. All I took didn't make the matter really any worse. So Uncle John swamped Ruth, too, did he? It's rough on me just now; but what if she had accepted me? I should have been in a box then."

There was comfort in his misery, therefore, and there was fire in the grate, and all that pile of rubbish would burn, including Uncle John's letter.

That was an uncomfortable evening for a great many people, but not one of all those who mourned for John Belford, or for the failure of the house of which he had been the head, passed the long hours more wretchedly than did Mr. Gideon Street.

There is hardly anything more trying to manly fortitude than an arrest on a felonious accusation, locked up over Sunday, to sit and eat one's heart out in solitude with a prospect of possible years and years of just such locking up in some lonely cell or other.

"It would be almost as bad to be let out now," said Gideon to himself more than once, "and have men look at me as they will."

Late in the night, as he lay there in the darkness, other words burst from him:

"And she! Ruth Faraday, to think I am a thief, and that I stole from HER!"

It was not exactly a yell of agony, but it was a very good suppressed likeness of one.

He could send for a lawyer even on a Sunday, and he could be assured that his arrest was an unwarrantable, hasty proceeding, and that the magistrate would surely let him out again on Monday morning, after a few formalities; but something very black had settled over the soul of Gideon Street. He knew as well as if he had been told that the reason of his absence was now well understood in the mansion of the Widow Belford.

What he did not know was that the news had been carried there by Marvin Belford, or how much of emphasis it had added to the replies made by Ruth Faraday to sundry gracefully, even passionately, tendered pleadings.

One night more, a dreadfully dark one, full of tempest out of doors, and marked by other tempests in some homes and in such dim crypts as they lock up suspected felons in.

Gideon's man of law was right, nevertheless, and before the noon of Monday, he was free to walk past the closed doors of the old banking-house. He knew he was stared at by a number of men who passed him as he came up the street; but only one old acquaintance spoke to him.

"What's the cause of the failure?" was Gideon's reply; "can't say. I'm told the money gave out and they had to close. I left them the day before. You will have to ask somebody else."

Ruth Faraday was in her own room that afternoon when a servant knocked at the door and told her Mr. Street was in the parlor and wished to see her.

"Tell him I'll come right down." Then she sat down upon a trunk she had been packing. "Gideon! I thought he was in prison. What shall I say to him? Guilty? No, indeed; I don't believe a word of it. If I keep him waiting he will think I do."

He stood in the middle of the parlor when she flashed in, and she paused for a moment. He had never before looked so very large and strong and noble, only his face was white.

"Miss Faraday——"

"Gideon, I don't believe it!"

"But, Miss Faraday, I spent last night, the day before, the night before that, in a felon's cell. I am dishonored."

"You did not do it? You did not take their money or my bonds?"

"Their money—the deficit?—it was gone before I ever entered the bank. I did take your bonds, all of them."

"You did? Gideon!"

"Yes, I did. Your uncle gave them to me to keep for you. I have kept them. Here they are."

She had seen the valise he was now opening. It had given her a swift thought that he was going away, but now he took from it a package which he tore open in her presence.

"Gideon——"

"They are all here, Miss Faraday. I have been true to my trust."

"Don't count them, Gideon, please don't. I would trust you with anything. I promised Uncle John I would. Did you say they put you in jail?"

She was close to him now, and looking up in his face, for the idea was growing upon her that he had somehow been suffering on her account, and the tears were in her eyes and voice.

"Never mind that, Miss Faraday. I can't leave town till the investigation is over. I shall go then, but I wanted to put your property in your own hands as soon as possible."

A great storm was shaking him from head to foot, but his eye and voice were steady till her answer came:

"These things? What can I do with them? Won't you take care of them for me? Wouldn't they help you to get into business, Gideon? or half of them?"

"Ruth Faraday!"

"You are not dishonored! You are not disgraced! I don't believe a word of it. Won't you, Gideon? Please do!" The tears were pouring down her face in a great shower as she looked upon the terrible pain in his, and her hands went out to him in such a way that he could but take them, they seemed so eager to be taken. "I suffered so all yesterday after I knew what they had done to you."

The two pairs of hands—the small ones and the very large ones—clung fast to one another for a moment and a beautiful light dawned first in Ruth's face and then in Gideon's.

"Ruth? Is it so? Ruth?"

"Gideon, I've been finding it out for two weeks, but it must have been so before."

"I found it out a year ago, and it all but killed me. Yesterday, all the night long, as I lay there——"

"Gideon! Please do not! It is dreadful!"

His head had been bending lower and lower for some seconds, and he had dropped one of her hands that his arm might be free.

"Oh, Ruth, I can face anybody now. All the world!"

Too much time could not be spent in the parlor, for it was due to Mrs. Belford that the state of affairs should be explained to her.

"I don't understand it at all, Ruth," was the widow's final comment. "It's all terrible. And your fortune is safe, and you are engaged to Mr. Street, and nobody knew a word about it, and they put him in jail! It's enough to drive me crazy."

Ruth had yet another explanation to make that day, and it seemed to puzzle very much a pair of brisk-mannered gentlemen who called to see her on important business.

"Do we understand you, Miss Faraday? You had no property in the hands of Belford Brothers?"

"Not any, sir. It was all removed some time ago—before the death of my uncle. I have not lost anything."

"But Mr. Street is accused——"

"No, he is not, sir; not by me. I am of full age. He has my entire confidence, and he is in entire charge of my business affairs."

"Ah! certainly. Of course. I think we had better go; do you not, Mr. Johnson?"

"Reckon we had. There's an awful leak in this business somewhere. 'Tisn't here."

Ruth Faraday had never in her life before appeared so dignified and positive as she did while she was bowing out of the parlor those two emissaries of law and justice, and there came a rustle of silk behind her as she did so.

"Ruth, dear, I'm so glad Mr. Street saved your bonds! But what will brother William say, and your cousin Marvin?"

"What will they say? I never want to see them again. How will they dare to look Gideon in the face after what they have done? Arresting him!"

"Oh, dear me! I had almost forgotten about that. I was thinking of you and Marvin."

"Aunt Carrie—Well, you might as well know. I told Marvin what I thought of him and his father last night when he told me they had put Gideon in jail. He will never trouble me any more."

It was not likely he would know that any vision he might have of Ruth would surely confound itself in his mind with another of Gideon Street.

Nevertheless, after all was settled, even long afterward, when Mrs. Ruth Street and her husband had freely pardoned everybody, neither Mr. William Belford nor his son Marvin was able to give himself a satisfactory explanation of the tape-bound package and the bonds it did not contain. Like the long-hidden deficit, it remained one of the "mysteries of banking."

[THE END.]



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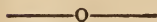
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